

PLUCK AND LUCK

COMPLETE
STORIES OF ADVENTURE.

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NEW YORK, July 25, 1900.

DESERTED

OR,

Thrilling Adventures in the Frozen North.

By HOWARD AUSTIN.

CHAPTER I.

IN THE ICE—THE "ATLAS" AND CREW—FOREBODINGS.

The exploring steamer *Atlas* lay fast in the ice, her masts and spars covered with a glittering mantle, her decks thick with snow, her engines disabled, her rudder gone, and her progress to the north most completely blocked.

She had been fitted out by private parties in the United States, and sent on an exploring expedition to the North Pole, or as near thereto as possible.

But now her voyage had come to a sudden termination, and her officers and crew had the melancholy prospect before them of passing a winter in the ice, to say nothing of what might occur when the pack should be loosened, and the waters be again set free from their cold and glittering fetters.

Her commander was Captain Charles Chicks, an experienced seaman, a careful navigator, and a great traveler; but he was not exactly the sort of man to command an Arctic expedition, his forte not lying in that direction.

His lieutenant, Mr. Wheeling, his ice pilot, Mr. Manne, his chief engineer, Mr. Tyrrell, and his boatswain, Dickson, were all old Arctic travelers, however, and experienced men withal, so that if he himself were a little out of his element, he had good advisers and men capable of giving him the best assistance possible.

His ability as a commander had never been questioned, but he was new to the Arctic, and therefore not to be depended on in an emergency, as might have been the case had Mr. Wheeling, with his knowledge of the north, possessed his commander's executive powers.

The *Atlas* had been caught in the pack ice on the western shore of Lady Franklin Bay, some two miles from the shore, in which position she had been for two months previous to the opening of our story, which begins in November, 1870, the *Atlas* having left New York in July of the same year.

She was caught fast in the floe, but at a point where she was out of the influence of the moving pack, and therefore remained nearly stationary, while, at the distance of a few rods, the surging, grinding, crushing, ever-restless mass moved steadily on toward the north, destroying whatever came within its cruel grasp.

No one could say whose fault it was that the *Atlas* had gotten into this difficulty, for no one seemed to know, as everything had been done, apparently, that could be; but as it could not be helped now, little was said upon the subject, though perhaps had Engineer Tyrrell been closely questioned upon the matter, he might have made some startling revelations.

Spencer Tyrrell was a man of over six feet in height, his

stature seeming to be greater on account of his slim figure, was raw-boned and angular, wore a long, yellow chin beard and mustache—being of a decidedly blonde type, by the way—with watery blue eyes, a large, sensuous mouth, long, sharp nose, and low forehead, his chin denoting weakness, his nose and mouth cruelty, and his eyes and forehead low cunning and craft.

People generally would have called him handsome; he had a ready flow of language, not always made up of the choicest terms, however, and he was accounted and rated as a good man in his position, and generally secured a good billet, but for all that, a thinking man would find something in him not at all pleasing, and be very chary at making friends with him.

He seemed to have a good many friends, however, and yet, when these were counted over, they would be found to be all lacking in some essential, and not quite the class of men that a cautious man would care to reckon as his friends, perhaps not even as acquaintances.

However, no one could say any evil of Spencer Tyrrell, or at least none was said, but for all that there were several members of the crew of the *Atlas* who studiously avoided him, and had as little as possible to do with him.

Two of these latter were Frank Anderson, a young fellow of nineteen or twenty, and Theodore Freeman, his chum, and a boy of his own age, both volunteers on board the *Atlas*, and both fine young fellows.

They were only sailors, to be sure, but they saw more or less of Spencer Tyrrell, and they not only did not like him, but they distrusted and feared him as well; that is, they were not afraid of him, in an ordinary sense, but they felt a fear of evil, consequent on his presence, though they had no particular reason to feel that he hated or had any sinister designs against themselves.

It was tacitly agreed upon between them, however, that they should have nothing to do with him, that they should avoid a quarrel as well as entering upon friendly relations with him, and that they should always be on the lookout for treachery on his part.

The man himself seemed to know that the boys distrusted and feared him from some unknown cause, and he hated them all the more heartily on that account, as he had always prided himself upon being able to conceal his real feelings and character, and therefore was angry because these had been fathomed even in a slight degree by the two young fellows.

The vessel had been caught in the ice, as has been stated, some two months, but as yet no efforts had been made to continue the expedition, or to make explorations of the neighboring country.

In fact, the winter was a most severe one, and the captain had deemed it more expedient to look after the safety of his

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men at present than to undertake expeditions which might only cripple them.

There was a pack of dogs, numbering seventeen, and they were well provided with sledges and boats, so that it would be an easy matter enough to make up an exploring party when the weather should permit, but just now it was impracticable.

"Frank, do you know that tomorrow is Thanksgiving Day at home?" asked young Freeman of his chum, one evening as they sat in the mess-room of the fore-castle, eating supper.

"What have you got to be thankful for, I'd like to know!" spoke up one of the party, a long, thin, cadaverous-looking specimen of humanity by the name of Sam Salt. "I'm sure I ain't a bit thankful. I'm half starved, in the first place, if you want particulars."

"You certainly eat enough," retorted Frank.

"Eat—yes that's it, but what do I eat? Good Heavens! what's that you've got there, Ted Freeman?" he suddenly cried, looking fixedly at the young man.

"It looks to me like a pork sandwich, and I'll soon demonstrate to myself that it is one."

"Pork? Don't you know that some pork is unwholesome—not to say poisonous? Here, you must not peril your life in that fashion. Let me see if it's good first, and if it don't hurt me, then you can eat it. I'm willing to be a martyr for your sake."

Then taking the sandwich from Theodore's hands before the latter could resist, he proceeded to take several huge mouthfuls of it, in rapid succession, while its owner looked on in open-mouthed astonishment.

Not until the last crumb had disappeared down his cavernous maw did Sam Salt venture to give an opinion concerning the propriety of eating the article in question, but then, smacking his lips and rubbing his stomach, he said, glibly:

"Well, I can safely say that I felt no evil effects from it, but perhaps one bite is not enough for a test, and if you've got another one handy I can tell you better whether you ought to eat that sort of thing or not."

"Thank you," returned Freeman, with a laugh. "I think I'll do the testing myself," and, supplying himself with a second sandwich from a plate in his lap, he moved further away from the martyr to science.

"Experiment with some other fellow's grub next time, Sam," said Frank, with a laugh. "You can't play the same game twice on Ted."

"There's no game about it," indignantly retorted Sam. "Some kinds of food are very bad, and I wouldn't see any of my friends kill themselves for anything. Are you quite sure that the piece of beef you've got is not full of creepers?"

"Let them creep, if they can," laughed Frank, bolting the meat. "It pleases them and don't hurt me. You've had your own supper, let me have mine."

"H'm! you don't call this a supper, do you?" asked Sam, lugubriously. "It's only fodder, to my mind, and not food. Ha! I remember a supper that Jack Spratt and I had once, and that was a supper."

"What did you have?"

"Well, first we had some clams on the half-shell, a la North Pole, that is to say, very cold and slippery, and then we had a redingote of Chili pepper, stuffed a la sauvage, if you know what that is, followed by a puree of buckwheat cakes and sausages, with molasses trimmings, and winding up with a cabriolet of pickled tripe and pigs' feet, a beefsteak a la Union, and an apple pie ad libitum."

"Did you have anything to drink with all that?"

"Drink! Of course we did. We had lots of it. There was aqua pura, one of the best wines you ever tasted, and Salamagundy, and Mahogany claret, with a bumper of Sockdolageri to finish with. H'm! that was a supper to remember and make your mouth water for months afterward."

"Then you don't like the feed here?"

"No, I don't. I'm always hungry."

"'Pon my word," put in Jeff Tyler, one of the party, "it's no wonder you're thin, for you eat so much that the weight of it is enough to make a walking skeleton of you. Eat less and you'll be fatter."

There was a shout at this sally, and the meal being over, the men retired or busied themselves with different occupations, leaving the grumbler alone to brood over his troubles.

That night it came on to snow soon after nine o'clock, and, as by the sounds in the distance there was evidently some commotion going on in the ice pack, Captain Chicks remained no deck, accompanied by one of his officers and by Frank and his friend, although the young men remained through choice, and not because they were ordered to do so.

Frank was dressed from top to toe in furs, with a hood over his head and heavy mittens on his hands, but very little of his

face being exposed to the weather, so that by keeping in constant motion he kept himself as warm as could be desired.

The snow at last fell so thick and fast that it was impossible to see as far ahead as the length of the vessel, the cracking and pounding of the ice continuing and growing louder every few minutes, making the position of those on board the *Atlas* more dreadful, as they could not tell at what moment she might be loosened from her hold and borne out into the influence of the moving ice.

"I don't like this," observed Frank to Ted, supposing no one but his friend to be in hearing. "Suppose we should be caught in the ice and crushed?"

"Small loss if somebody should be," muttered to himself a man standing not far away, in the shadow of the house on deck, "for that would save me the trouble of doing what is in my mind."

The man was Tyrrell, and could the boys have known what he was thinking about, they would have found reason enough for their distrust and dislike of him.

CHAPTER II.

TED'S ADVENTURE ON THE ICE.

It was close upon midnight, and Frank and his chum were still upon deck, when there came a sudden crash, and the vessel keeled over to leeward with a groan, as though she had been a human being.

The boys were thrown down, and ere they could regain their feet, a voice cried out:

"Call all hands! We are going down!"

There was great confusion at once, the men rushing up from below in the wildest fright.

The vessel shivered once from stem to stern, and a frightful crash was heard forward, but after that all was still.

"What has happened?" asked Ted.

"Don't know, but it seems to me as if an iceberg must have overturned and fallen upon us."

However, the snow still fell in such a blinding mass that it was impossible to tell what had happened.

Somebody got two or three big lanterns, and the captain, Tyrrell and two or three sailors, went forward to endeavor to ascertain the extent of the damage.

All they could see was that the bowsprit had been broken short off, that some of the deck planks forward had been ripped up, and that there was a big hole in the bow, though as yet no water had come in.

"It's this wretched pack," muttered the captain. "It was a lucky thing for us that we weren't swamped."

Those below now reported that the steamer did not seem to have sprung a leak, as the pumps had been set going and sucked in a very few minutes, there being nothing more than the ordinary amount of bilge water in the hold.

It was easier to examine affairs below decks than above, and a party with lanterns, headed by the captain, went down to make an investigation.

The vessel was keeled over a little upon one side, but she now no longer rocked, and was evidently tight, so that no especial danger was felt, and Captain Chicks ordered all hands to turn in and await the morning.

The sun being at this time of the year totally extinguished, there was little difference between day and night, it being dark most of the time, except, of course, when the moon shone or the fitful gleam of the aurora illumined the scene.

In the morning, or at least what would have been the morning had the sun been shining, the snowfall had ceased, a cold spell had set in, and the aurora made the whole heavens brilliant, so that the adventurers could see their way as well as though it had been daylight.

There had been some movement in the pack during the night, and a huge mass of ice had fallen upon and broken away the bowsprit, besides making a hole in the bow big enough for three men to enter, walking abreast.

The hull had been raised up, however, much higher than formerly, and now seemed to rest upon a cake of ice which had been driven under it by the force of the current, and was as clear of the water as though resting in dry dock.

The captain gave orders that a sail should first be thrummed over the opening, and that then the carpenter should close it, as nearly as practicable, by building a thoroughly tight partition or bulkhead across it on the inside.

To restore the shape of the bow as it had been originally, was out of the question, as the forward ribs had been so broken—parts of them having been carried away—that this was impossible.

"There is no chance of our taking the *Atlas* home now," re-

marked the commander, sadly, "and our best plan is to save the boats and sledges, form a winter encampment on shore, and in the spring beat a retreat to the south, saving what we can for that purpose."

The work of patching up the bow and making the vessel habitable was at once begun upon, but in the meantime, those not employed on this job engaged in other work or went out upon expeditions across the ice, more for exercise than with the idea of making any discoveries.

At one o'clock, which was the dinner hour, some of the latter had not returned, although the ship's discipline required that all men not engaged in regular expeditions should be present promptly at meal time, there being a general warning, also, that no one should venture to any distance from the vessel, taking care to keep her always in sight.

When Frank sat down to dinner he observed that Theodore was absent, and, questioning the men, he received the information that his chum had gone off for a run upon the ice soon after breakfast, and had not yet returned.

"I have told Ted not to go away without me," he thought, "for he is terribly green on such matters, and it would be the easiest thing possible for him to miss his way and go astray. I don't like this business at all."

The young fellow finished his dinner as quickly as possible, refusing many choice dainties which had been prepared for the occasion, and, obtaining permission to leave the vessel, set out at once in search of his friend.

The air had grown much colder than in the morning, and there was a keen wind blowing, which made one feel, when facing it, that a shower of needles was driving into his face.

Frank put on extra preparations against the weather, his face almost entirely covered, and also wore heavier boots and mittens than ordinarily.

He took with him a steel-tipped pike to assist him in walking, and provided himself with a small bundle of food, a little flask of spirits, a short coil of rope, and a brace of revolvers.

Thus equipped, he set out across the ice, at first following the foot prints in the snow, which were still plainly visible, as the latter had hardened before the wind arose.

There were several sets of prints, but after a while one pair went off alone, and this single track Frank followed, believing it to have been made by his friend.

Presently, however, the track made a detour and returned toward the ship, and Frank was puzzled.

He determined, at last, after debating with himself, to push on, keeping the vessel always in sight, in the hope of finding the missing boy, and he therefore resumed his weary march.

The silence and the solitude were dreadful, and were it not that the sight of the vessel was some sort of companionship to him, the poor boy felt that he would go mad.

"What a fate to be left alone in this desolate place," he murmured. "The dreariest dungeon would be a paradise to this, for then one could know that there were human beings near him; but here, the sense of loneliness is terrible."

On and on pressed the boy until, just as he feared to take another step lest he should lose sight of the vessel, which he could just see in the distance, he beheld some dark object on the ice some little way off.

Filled with a vague hope, he hurried on, and soon was certain that the object on the ice was the form of a human being.

It took but little time now to reach it, and kneeling down by the motionless form, he turned it over and beheld Theodore's pale features.

Placing one hand upon the boy's heart, he was gratified to find that it was still beating, although faintly, and that just the faintest breath issued from the cold lips.

"Thank God, I am in time!" he cried, as he tore off his friend's mittens and began chafing his hands energetically.

Then, forcing a few drops of liquor down the boy's throat, he thrust his bare hands into his bosom and began rubbing and chafing the skin violently, in order to arouse the dormant circulation.

"I can't carry him back alone," he wailed, "and I must make him do a little to help himself. Ted! Ted! for God's sake do revive, or we shall both meet our death!"

While the eager boy was striving to awaken the life of his friend, his own was in deadly peril.

As he knelt there, so utterly absorbed by his labor of love that he was perfectly oblivious to all that went on around him, a stealthy form had crept from behind a mound of ice, and advanced upon him unheeded.

It was a man, tall and spare, with a red beard and cruel eyes, and whose every motion betokened the wicked errand upon which he had come.

The man was Tyrrell, and in his upraised hand he had a clubbed rifle, which he was now about to bring down upon Frank's head.

Is there no warning voice to tell the boy of his danger? If not, his death is certain.

The man smiles cruelly as he poises his weapon for the blow, and then, nerving himself for the effort, he takes one step forward.

God help the boy now, for unless the warning comes his life is not worth a rush.

Suddenly Theodore opens his eyes, stares at Frank wildly, and uttering a cry of terror, throws up his arms, and hurls his friend over upon his side in the snow.

Crash!

Tyrrell's weapon strikes the ice with such force that the stock of his rifle is separated from the barrel.

Frank turns at the sound, and sees the useless stock lying on the ice.

At the same moment, glancing up, he sees a man dressed in furs hurrying off, and presently he disappears.

"Who was that?" he cries, not recognizing the man from seeing his back alone.

"I wouldn't swear," mutters Theodore, faintly, "but I thought it was Mr. Tyrrell. He had his gun raised ready to strike you, when I woke up and cried out."

"Well, well, we have no time to think of that now," said Frank, hastily. "Here, swallow this, and get on your pins. I am going to make you put in some lively licks with those legs of yours."

Theodore swallowed the big dose of spirits which Frank gave him, and he felt as if he were burning up.

"That's better than freezing up," answered Frank, getting him on his feet and supporting him with one arm. "Now see if you can't run."

He could, for a short distance, but then he wanted to stop, and would have done so, if Frank had not obliged him to keep on, even faster than before.

At last, however, Frank succeeded in getting so much life into his chum that the latter would have distanced him, had not Frank kept hold of his arm to keep him from going astray, which he might easily have done.

Our hero and his friend kept up the same terrible pace until Theodore's whole body was in a glow, and the perspiration was actually streaming down his face, but by this time they had reached the vessel.

Going aboard, they proceeded at once to the fore-castle, where Theodore discovered that he had been frost bitten in many places, and but for Frank's timely interference would have been frozen to death.

"I don't know how it happened," he explained, "for all I can remember is getting drowsy and sitting down to rest, and then the next thing you were bending over me trying to revive me, and some one was about to strike you."

"Don't say anything about that," cautioned Frank. "I have my suspicions, but we must keep them to ourselves, for the present. At any rate, we have something to be thankful for even here, and that is that we are both alive and well."

CHAPTER III.

THE WRECK OF THE "ATLAS."

Considering the fact that any sudden change in the wind might set the ice around them in motion, and free the vessel from her fetters—in which event the greatest danger was to be apprehended—Captain Chicks deemed it expedient to begin the building of a shelter on land at once, in order to forestall the calamity of being without either that or a vessel to protect them from the wintry blast.

The next morning was decided upon as the time to commence operations, and it was none too soon, as subsequent events proved.

The dogs were brought out and harnessed to the sledges, which were loaded with provisions and supplies of all sorts, and then driven over the ice to the shore, some two miles distant, where the contents were deposited.

After several trips had been made, the construction of a temporary shelter was begun, all hands engaging in the work.

The sides of this affair were made of rocks, piled one upon the other, a number of spare spars being laid on top, and over these sail-cloth was placed, the ends being secured at the ground by placing rocks upon them.

A rude opening was left at one side for a doorway, which also permitted the smoke and impure air to escape, there being no other means of ventilation.

This hut was capable of containing the whole ship's company, and was provided with two stoves, one for cooking and

the other for heating purposes, simply, besides having bunks for the men placed around the sides.

One whole day was consumed in this work, and then the weather grew so cold, being accompanied with blinding gusts of snow, that all hands were confined to the vessel for three days.

This time was occupied by the carpenter in building sectional walls of planking, to be placed outside of the hut for its further protection, these being so made that they could be taken apart and packed in a small compass for transportation across the ice.

The others were employed in making and repairing fur garments; in making up packages of provisions to be cached; in cleaning guns and pistols, and sharpening pikes and axes; in looking after the boats, and in various other useful ways, not one of the crew being idle.

When the weather at last became more moderate, a sudden change in the wind warned the ice pilot that they might look for disturbances, and he made his fears known to the captain.

Indeed, it was not long before the ice began to show signs of breaking up again, and the boats were made ready to be transported upon the sledges, it being of the most vital importance that they, of all things, should be saved, for upon them depended the salvation of the whole party.

The boats were safely transported very early the next morning, though the journey was a difficult one, as already the ice had begun to move slightly in the neighborhood of the vessel, and beyond it could be seen to be violently agitated.

The wind was constantly freshening, and not long after the sledges containing the boats had reached shore, Mr. Manne, the ice pilot from his post in the crow's-nest, reported that he could see open water a few miles to windward of them, and that the ice seemed to be advancing rapidly.

"To the shore, all hands!" cried the captain; "there is no time to lose!"

Tyrrell, the engineer, amended this statement by declaring that the men would have time to load the sledges with sea chests, and this was accordingly done, the trip being successfully made.

Tyrrell himself went with the first sledge, but Manne remained behind, accompanied by Frank and Theodore, Sam Salt, and Jeff Tyler.

Frank went up into the crow's-nest with the pilot, and witnessed the advancing of the ice, which was indeed a grand sight.

He could see the water rishing through narrow leads, breaking the ice off in great masses on either side, piling it up in layers and driving it ahead with fearful force, opening passages where all had been apparently solid but a moment before, and rushing so irresistibly in its tumultuous course.

"Better come down now, my lad," said Manne, presently, preparing to descend. "We will be better off on land half an hour hence than to remain here."

Descending to the deck, they found the captain just preparing to go to land in one of the sledges, the others having remained behind.

"You have your instruments, sir?" asked the pilot.

"Yes. What do you think of this?"

"I think that there will be a smash-up here very shortly, and if our poor vessel survives, it will be a piece of extraordinary good luck."

"Tyrrell says we are beyond the influence of the pack, and that we are safe enough until spring."

"What does Tyrrell know about it?" demanded the other, angrily. "This wind is settling the pack directly upon us, and in less than half an hour it will be open water here. If he thinks we are so safe, why does he not remain aboard?"

"He is superintending the work on shore."

"Yes, and taking good care of his precious life, I'll be bound," was the contemptuous retort. "Let us go ashore ourselves, sir, for the time presses."

Hardly had the sledge started away from the vessel, bearing all those who had remained behind, when a loud rumbling was heard behind, and looking back, Frank saw the ice suddenly open not a thousand feet astern of the vessel.

"Faster!" cried Manne to the Esquimaux in charge of the sledge, and they plied their long lashes more vigorously than ever.

Over the ice flew the dogs, the occupants of the sledge having to hold on tightly as they passed over the rough places to keep from being spilled out.

"Look!" cried Frank, suddenly pointing back.

The water had suddenly burst up from under the ice, as though an explosion had taken place, a great column of water and ice shooting up into the air to the height of fifty feet.

It fell in a heavy shower upon the surrounding ice, and upon

the vessel, and immediately thereafter a second uprising took place, more terrible than the first.

"Faster; faster yet!" cried Manne.

The whips cracked spitefully, the dogs yelped and barked as the keen lash took them in the flanks, and the sledge fairly flew over the rough ice, jolting and pitching, and more than once threatening to scatter its occupants in every direction.

When Frank looked again his astonishment was supreme, for the *Atlas* was afloat and bounding along upon the ice-laden waters with all her old-time spirit.

It was not for long, however, for by the time the sledge had reached the shore she was seen to be in great danger.

The huge masses of ice were crowding in upon her, and in a moment she was jammed between two immense blocks and thrown upon her side.

The concussion was so great that her sides were stove in and the mainmast cut in twain by the weight of ice which suddenly fell upon the deck and rolled over to leeward.

As far as they could see the ice was now in motion, the water running like a mill-race, huge cakes of ice piling one upon another, or grinding themselves to powder, the whole mass being carried forward at an awful speed.

Our party had barely reached land when the inshore ice suddenly broke free and joined the main body in the mad race toward the north.

"Look!" suddenly cried a dozen voices.

Their beloved vessel was seen to roll over upon her beam ends, the water poured in a flood upon her, and then, wrecked and dismayed, torn, mangled, and rent asunder, and bearing but little resemblance to the noble creation she had once been, the unfortunate ship was seen struggling amid the ice and waves, borne rapidly on to her doom.

Then, as though caught between the cogs of some gigantic mill, she went all to pieces, and the fragments were scattered in every direction.

"That's the last of her," sighed Frank. "I loved the old vessel like a human being, and with its destruction I seem almost to have lost an old friend. How soon may I, too, meet the same fate?"

At these words Tyrrell, who was standing near, smiled cruelly, and muttered to himself:

"How soon, indeed! Not too soon to suit my purpose, let me tell you that!"

CHAPTER IV.

A DESPERATE CASE AND ITS REMEDY.

And so the ill-fated *Atlas* had perished, and her crew had been left on a bleak and desolate coast, to battle with ill-fortune as best they might.

The sectional walls for the outside of the house had been saved, and the first thing to be done was to put these in place, secure them firmly, and make all snug and warm within.

Snow was banked around the bottom to the height of two or three feet, and packed down hard so as to keep out all draughts, and as considerable snow was expected to fall upon the roof, that was made as strong as possible, to bear the extra weight which would then only add to the warmth within, and not add to their discomfort.

All hands worked with a will, for all were equally interested in the matter, and no one idled or shirked, the captain himself setting an example to the rest, and toiling harder than any one.

When they came to get the provisions and other supplies together in the store-house which had been made just off of the main dwelling, there did not appear to be as much as was supposed had been saved, and the captain questioned his officers about it.

They all gave straightforward answers, and the captain concluded that he had miscalculated the amount, and that there was not as much as he had thought, so there was an end of the matter, and nothing more was said.

"We've got enough to have lots of good dinners out of yet," observed Sam Salt, "though this black cook of ours don't know how to make the best of what he's got. For instance, he might give us a hurricane of mutton with pickaninny sauce, or stewed eels stuffed with onions, or——"

"Put plums into the duff," added Frank, "for now, it is plum-duff only in name, and not as a matter of fact."

"Oh, that may be good enough for a cook that don't know anything, but you should see the puddings and pies that I've eaten. H'm! makes me hungry to think of 'em. Cranberry tart a la macaroni; gooseberry pudding with hottentots floating all around it; indigo pudding with all kinds of sauce, and

slam-bang pie, with grated ruta бага—that's the kind of stuff you ought to have."

"You ought to give Mert a few recipes, and perhaps he'd make you up something nice," suggested Jeff Tyler.

"Oh, yes, to be sure he would," chimed in Joe, the boy who waited on the captain, being a sort of relation of his and privileged to do just about as he chose. "He'd make a fine hash of that black cat Grim of his, provided Grim himself would not object."

"Or a fricassee of Spitz dog," added Ted.

"You fellows are too funny," retorted Sam. "Do you take me for a Chinaman? Besides, that coon couldn't catch Grim—the old Tom has allus been afraid of him."

"You'd laugh to see that cat the first time Mert came aboard," said Joe. "He's black enough, goodness knows, but Grim is blacker yet. Well, Grim was setting on the captain's table, and hadn't seen anything of Mert, who had only just been engaged, when in he comes to get the captain's orders."

"By Jinks, when that old black tom-cat looked up and saw the darky, he just made one flying leap off that table, and smash he went through the cabin window on to the deck outside."

"H'm!" said Mert, turning up his flat nose as much as he was able, and giving a sniff of scorn, 'ye needn't ter be a-scared of me. I ain't half as black as you is.' And ever since that, though we coaxed Grim back, for he knows when he's well off, he's had as little to do with Mert as possible, and would sooner steal his grub than take it from that coon. If it was not for me and the captain he'd starve to death, I do believe."

"Perhaps he knows where the missing grub is," muttered Sam, while the others laughed.

It happened, however, that Spence Tyrrell was passing the group at that moment, and Frank noticed that he slightly turned color at Sam's remark, as though it had been meant for him.

Frank had noticed the same thing when Tyrrell had answered the captain's questions, although it had not been so marked as now.

"It's a hard thing to think of a man," mused Frank, within himself; "but if there were actually more provisions than have turned up, and some of them have been stolen or hidden away, which is much the same thing, I bet I can put my hand on a man that knows something about it."

The work of making themselves comfortable for the winter, for there was no doubt but that they would have to remain as long, and perhaps longer, than that, proceeded with all diligence, the house being more habitable every night, until at last there was little to be done in that quarter.

There were still seals, bears, and other animals to be found about, and hunting parties were organized to go in chase of them and obtain their furs and flesh, both of which were important items.

The pack of dogs which had been brought along were kept secured in a little snow hut, where they were fed every day by one of the Esquimaux, and exercised quite often, though, of course, they were not allowed to run free, as in that event nothing would ever have been seen of them.

The hunters procured furs, which were made into garments, and the flesh of animals, which was salted down and put away for future use, as there was no knowing how long they might be obliged to remain here, in which case any extra supplies they might lay in would be of great value to them in the future.

The routine practiced on board the vessel was still kept up, there being regular hours for meals, for rising, and for going to bed, for exercise on the ice, for work, and for recreation.

In this manner the men were kept occupied, and, as a matter of course, contented, a most important consideration under the circumstances in which they were placed.

At last, by the aid of carpenter, tailor, chandler, cook, steward, and general superintendent, the house was comfortably fitted, well lighted and warmed up, the men were well clothed, there was food in abundance, there was plenty of good reading, both instructive and amusing, there was no lack of entertainments, and, as the year turned and the bitter cold set in, our party of castaways found themselves as favorably situated for passing the winter in the ice as their fondest dreams could have imagined.

The animals of the region had all disappeared; the fort, or house, whichever they might call it, was nearly buried in the snow, there being an arched passage, cut through an enormous drift, leading to the world outside; the long winter night had set in, the cold was most intense, and the most complete silence, the most utter desolation, took up their reign, undisturbed, over all the North.

One morning the captain called all hands together, and said:

"I have lately heard complaints among a number of us that

articles of clothing and other things are missing, and the steward tells me that he is constantly finding articles gone, when he knows that he could not have used them up.

"I should be sorry to think that any of you were guilty of theft, and yet this matter has now reached such a point that I cannot think otherwise. There are no Indians or strange Esquimaux about to commit these depredations, and, therefore, they must have been committed by some of our own party.

"This is a grave accusation, I know, but our situation demands that there should be the best of feeling among us, the most perfect harmony, for our safety as well as our happiness depends upon that. I propose to make a thorough investigation of this matter, and I would therefore like to know just what things have been taken, in order that we may determine who is the thief. First of all, I would say that I wish to give him an opportunity to confess, for in that event his past offenses will be condoned.

"I wish the thieving to stop right here, and if the evil-doer will come to me privately and own his fault, no one shall know who he is, although I warn him that his offenses must cease from this time, or measures will be taken to punish and make an example of him.

"I will stand in the doorway, and as I call out the names, let all pass out one by one. If any wish to speak to me, they can do so quietly and secretly, and no one but myself and he be the wiser."

This speech seemed to have a decided effect upon the men, and they all looked one upon another, as if trying to detect the thief, for however loose the morals of sailors may be in other directions, they regard a thief with the greatest contempt.

The captain then took up his position just outside and called off the names of his men at random, each passing out as he was called.

Each, as he passed his superior, saluted him, according to his own rank, and then continued on his way, so that he saw nothing of what went on behind him, but no one did more than this.

No one changed countenance to any degree more than the excitement of the occasion would warrant. No one confessed a fault or intimated that he was willing to do so at some more convenient time, and all passed out of the room, leaving the captain no wiser than he was before.

Captain Chicks then assembled them again, and said slowly: "It appears that no one is the thief. Now let me know who have missed anything from their wardrobes or elsewhere, Mr. Wheeling."

"Half a dozen silk undershirts, and as many pair of heavy hose, are missing from my chest, sir."

"Is that all?"

"Yes, sir."

"Mr. Manne?"

"Two pair of sealskin boots, three heavy shirts, a pea-jacket, and some of my smaller instruments, such as compasses, spirit levels, and the like. These things have disappeared, not all at once, but one at a time."

"Dr. Warren."

"I have lost a small chest of medicines, two bottles of alcohol, a pair of boots, five pounds of tobacco, half a dozen shirts, several pairs of socks, and some smaller articles which I cannot reckon up."

"Mr. Tyrrell, have you lost anything?" asked the captain, having made notes of the articles already mentioned.

"I have, sir," returned the engineer, quietly. "Two of my heaviest coats, several of my books, all my charts and logs, nearly all my tobacco and my private supply of liquors, several of my warmest shirts, and one pair of boots."

The boatswain, carpenter, steward, cook, and even Joe, the cabin boy, had lost various items of their personal effects, the cook and steward reporting that the stores seemed to have been tampered with, and whole casks of beef, hard-tack, pork and flour had been taken away, together with potatoes, apples, pickles, bottles of lime-juice, and other necessities, all of which had been missed from time to time, until the aggregate was quite considerable.

Going through the entire list, Captain Chicks found that there was not one of the officers or men, himself included, but what had lost something of value to him.

"I find," said he, gravely, "that the amount of things pilfered is much greater than I had imagined, and I am therefore convinced that systematic robbery has been going on among us for the last two months, and further, that the thieves have stolen from themselves, in order to hide the evidence of their guilt. Therefore, I conclude that this thieving has been systematic, and conducted with some purpose in view—I dare not say what."

The captain paused in order to let his words have their due effect, and then continued:

"I warn you now—and I call upon every honest man to aid me in apprehending the thieves—that the first man caught stealing, no matter how trifling the article, will be made an example of. You are still under naval discipline, let me tell you, and the punishment for an offense of this kind, under the circumstances in which we are placed, is death."

A hushed murmur ran around the room, and more than one face turned pale at these words.

Frank noticed that Spence Tyrrell turned red, but for that matter his own face was burning, he knew, and it need not be said that he was entirely innocent.

"Understand me," the captain continued; "affairs have now gone too far for any leniency. You have all been given a chance to confess, and no one has done so. The thieves are among us, and must be discovered and punished. I call upon every honest man here to aid me, and I warn all others that if the thieving goes on, somebody will have to suffer for it. Now you can go on with your usual duties and occupations."

CHAPTER V.

AN UNEXPECTED FOE—A THRILLING CHASE.

The greatest excitement prevailed after what had happened, as might naturally be supposed, but the men separated without anything further being said.

Frank, Theodore, Joe, the cabin boy, and Sam Salt went out together for a run over the ice, and of course the topic of conversation was the subject just discussed.

"See what your big appetite has got you into, Sam," said Joe, with a laugh.

"That's all right," returned the other. "I know I don't get enough to eat, and that I'm allus hungry, but if I was starving I wouldn't steal, and everybody knows it."

"Joe knows it, too, Sam," spoke up Frank, "and that's only his joking way. He wouldn't charge you with theft unless he was able to prove it."

"We'd better not go too far," said Theodore, "for it looks like snow, and it's easy enough to be lost, almost in sight of home, in this region."

"Oh, we can go further without any trouble," returned Frank, and so they continued.

"I thought the birds had all gone home," observed Sam, after a long silence, "but if I ain't mistaken, there's a snow owl sitting on that bit of ice yonder."

"That's a rare bird," cried Joe; "suppose we catch him and give him to the doctor for his collection?"

The surgeon of the party, Dr. Warren, was a great enthusiast on the subject of the feathered tribes of all climes, and he had already gathered a most valuable collection, and was not loath to get as many more as he could.

The possession of a snow owl, therefore, a most rare bird, by the way, would greatly enhance the value of his museum, and this the boy knew; and, being desirous of keeping within the eccentric doctor's good graces, it immediately occurred to him that to present him with the specimen in question would be the best way of accomplishing his object.

The others immediately assented to the proposition, and as it would be better to capture the creature alive, if possible, they began to advance toward it with all possible caution.

Frank was in advance, and dropping upon his hands and knees, he made his way swiftly and silently over the snow, without making as much as the faintest crunch or in any way disturbing his expected prize.

Reaching the mass of ice upon which the owl sat motionless, never looking to the right nor the left, nor uttering a sound, although it occasionally moved slightly, Frank suddenly sprang up, reached forward, and catching the bird by the throat, pulled it toward him.

Instantly there arose a yell which certainly no owl, snowy or otherwise, could have uttered, and the young fellow found himself suddenly confronted by a hideous savage, stalwart and strong, and a very giant in stature.

He was not an Innuut or Esquimau, but an Indian, the deadly enemy of these generally inoffensive people, upon whom they make war with the most persistent ferocity.

What Frank had mistaken for an owl was the head-dress of the savage, and he greatly resented being deprived of it, instantly brandishing his stone hatchet and making every demonstration of war.

Not only that, but he also gave utterance to a series of shrill calls, which were answered from several points, and instantly a score of his companions, men like himself, appeared from behind snow-drifts or mounds of ice, and rushed to his assistance.

It is needless to say that Frank instantly relinquished his

hold upon the captured trophy, and falling back several paces, cried out in alarm to his comrades.

"Indians!" yelled Sam Salt. "Northern Indians, as I'm a sinner! The very wust of the hull race. Skip, boys, or yer hair won't be worth the price of cutting it off!"

Notwithstanding this speech, Sam put himself on the defensive, his only weapons consisting of a pike, steel-pointed, and an ordinary sheath-knife.

Little Joe had a heavy walking staff, pointed with steel and very sharp, and Theodore carried another, in addition to a small, sharp hatchet stuck in his belt; but Frank, in addition to his pike, was provided with a pistol, which he had always carried since the time Tyrrell had made that attempt upon his life.

"Stand firm, boys!" he cried, joining his friends. "We'd better retreat, for these fellows outnumber us; but don't make a break or scatter, for then they will pick us off all the easier."

The Indians, seeing the small force opposed to them, began to make hostile demonstrations, advancing upon the little party with their weapons in their hands, and only awaiting a signal from their leader to make a charge.

"Don't let 'em close in upon us," cried Sam. "You fellers keep moving, and I'll cover your retreat."

This maneuver was tried, successfully at first, until the enemy became aware of the intention of the little party, and then they dashed forward with fierce yells.

Sam was about a dozen paces behind, covering the retreat, when three Indians made a rush upon him.

Grasping his pike firmly in both hands as the enemy came dashing pell-mell upon him, he impaled one of the Indians upon its sharp point, the point being driven through the fellow's body by the force with which he fell upon it as well as by which it was impelled.

Sam dropped his weapon and fled, three or four of the savages falling in a confused mass over the body of their dead comrade.

The hungry seaman, drawing his sheath-knife, rejoined his comrades, and the whole party fled in a body toward the fort.

Three or four tomahawks went whizzing through the air, but, although one of them passed disagreeably close to Frank's head, no damage was done.

"We must stop that," cried the lad, and turning swiftly he drew his pistol, a breech-loader, and fired.

The distance was so slight that there could be no missing, and the swift-winged messenger of death flew speedily to its mark, and laid low one of the Indians, a big fellow, who was just about to hurl a hatchet at the retreating whites.

The noise, as much as the sudden calamity which had overtaken them, caused the Indians to come to a sudden halt, while they gathered around their dead comrade in the greatest surprise.

They knew nothing of fire-arms, and the mystery of their associate's death frightened them more than the suddenness of it.

"They don't know what to make of it!" cried Sam, looking back. "That was a good idea o' yours, Frank. You'd better hurry up and load, and keep a-runnin', too, 'cause if you don't they'll catch us and make us into hash."

There was some little distance to go in order to reach the fort, and the light of the aurora was beginning to pale, threatening to leave them in total darkness, the moon not yet having arisen.

"Cut and run, boys!" cried Sam, "for if we lose sight of the house, we're goners sure enough."

The Indians, although they did not seem to have gotten over their alarm, were yet determined to have vengeance, and, leaving their comrade lying on the snow, they once more started in pursuit of the enemy.

The latter had made good headway, but the Indians were the better runners, and everything was in their favor.

"Keep on!" cried Frank, when he saw that the savages were gaining, "and I'll see what I can do toward stopping them again. I only wish this was a revolver instead of a single shot."

Turning quickly and taking as good an aim as possible, Frank fired, hitting an Indian running alongside the leader full in the forehead, and bringing him down as though he had been struck by a thunderbolt.

He struck the ice with great violence, and when his brother savages picked him up, he was stone dead, the coagulated blood oozing slowly from a small, round hole in his forehead.

Our friends improved this opportunity to increase their lead upon the Indians, while Frank reloaded and ran ahead, awaiting his chance to fire a third shot.

The Indians still outnumbered the whites, and now, with a fierce chorus of yells, they once more dashed forward, seeking

vengeance for the terrible and mysterious lessening of their numbers.

A short, heavy spear, hurled by one of them, struck Theodore in the back and knocked him down, not seriously hurting him, however.

Still, to assist him to his feet would cause a delay, and that was what the enemy wanted.

Standing beside his fallen chum, Frank fired another shot, this time merely wounding his man, and not killing him.

"That's bad," he muttered, with deep chagrin.

It was bad, for now the Indians saw that this mysterious weapon was not always fatal, and that gave them renewed courage.

"Leg it, Frank, as well as you know, and give young Joe a lift, for he can't run as fast as you!"

So shouted Sam, suddenly stooping down, picking up Theodore, and throwing him across his shoulder.

Frank took the cabin boy's hand and helped him wonderfully, while Sam brought up the rear in good style, although weighed down with his extra burden.

The house was now in plain sight, however, and, the captain and some others appearing and seeing the danger of their friends, flew to the rescue, and the Indians beat a hasty retreat.

CHAPTER VI.

A VISIT FROM THE ENEMY—A NARROW ESCAPE—FRANK'S TERRIBLE ACCUSATION.

When the little party entered the house, which they did at once after the departure of the Indians, Frank related their adventure to the captain, the latter being much surprised by the appearance of the Indians.

"I thought we were the only human beings to be found in all this desolate land," he said, "for as long as we have been here, we have seen no one, not even any wandering bands of Esquimaux."

"The numerous thefts are now explained," observed Wheeling.

"How so?"

"These Indians have doubtless been prowling about, and have entered the house when no one has been inside, or if so, sound asleep, as has often been the case. We have not been very watchful in that regard, having nothing to fear."

"By George, you are quite right," put in the doctor. "These Polar Indians are great thieves, and adroit ones, too. They will prowl around for days, and you won't know they are anywhere within a hundred miles, and steal whatever they can lay hold of."

"It looks reasonable enough," said the captain, "or would, supposing these thefts had all taken place within a short time, but on the contrary, they have now been going on for at least six weeks, and maybe longer. Indeed, you may remember that after the loss of the *Atlas* we missed many things which we were certain we had saved."

"We were all very much excited at that time," spoke up Tyrrell, with a cold smile, "and may have imagined many things which did not take place. I have only missed things of mine within a week."

"Well, whether these savages are the thieves or not, and I would rather believe they were than that any of us were guilty," pursued Captain Chicks, "they are to be feared, and we must strengthen our fort and always have somebody on guard."

"They can't break in," laughed the ice pilot, "with a three-foot wall of snow all around us, so that once we are within we are safe enough unless——"

"Unless what?"

"They would bank us in, which they might do by tumbling the snow walls leading from our door."

"For that reason we must keep watch; but," suggested Wheeling, "I don't think they would care to shut us in. They would rather pick us off one by one, from some ambuscade, as we come out, and then force an entrance and help themselves to whatever they took a fancy to."

A continuous watch was therefore kept during that night, the men relieving each other at regular intervals, but nothing occurred to cause the least alarm.

It might have been on account of the weather, which was exceedingly blustering, the snow whirling about in blinding drifts all through the night and choking up the doorway of the house, so that not only was it impossible to enter, but our friends were obliged to dig their way out again in the morning.

Upon venturing out, well protected from the cold and the

bitter wind, the captain and half a dozen of the men saw no signs of the Indians, and it was concluded that they had gone.

That night it was clear, still, and very cold, the fires within being kept up to their fullest capacity, and the men, upon going to bed, putting extra robes in their bunks.

Fortunately there was plenty of coal saved from the ill-fated steamer, and this warmed them much better than wood, of which there was also a liberal supply, though much of that had disappeared, together with other missing things.

It was about two o'clock in the morning, and Frank and his chum were sitting by the table, upon which burned a single shaded lamp, the others having been extinguished so that the men could sleep.

The two boys were on watch, and were conversing in low tones, when Frank suddenly put a finger to his lips as a signal of silence.

"What is it?" asked Theodore, with his eyes, however, for he uttered no sound.

"Listen! I thought I heard a footstep on the hard snow outside."

Both boys listened attentively for a few moments, and then both heard that peculiar noise which one makes by treading upon snow when the weather is particularly cold, a sort of crisp, crunching sound.

"There is some one outside," whispered Frank. "Is the door fast?"

Yes, it was, as both boys could just see through the half light, a heavy bar being placed across it, resting in iron sockets upon either side.

Frank arose cautiously and approached the door, which was suddenly moved, the latch rattling at the same time, as though some one were endeavoring to push it open.

Then there was a muttered exclamation without, as though the person, whoever he was, had not expected any resistance.

"Somebody is trying to get in; go and wake the captain, Ted."

The young fellow hurried to the captain's bedside, while Frank went to the door and listened.

The captain was soon aroused, and, hurrying on his outer garments, caught up a gun and followed Theodore to the door.

"What is it, Frank?" he whispered.

The door was again moved as much as it was possible to do so, and then the same guttural sound which Frank had heard was repeated.

Then a hurried consultation was heard without, as if there were several persons talking together.

The tones were loud enough, but the words could not be understood.

"The Indians!" whispered Frank.

At this the captain suddenly struck the door with the stock of his rifle to command attention, and then asked, in a firm tone:

"Who is there, and what do you want?"

There was an instant silence without.

Then a deep voice answered in broken English:

"Come in—cold—something to eat."

"Who are you? Innuit?"

"No, poor Injun—cold—hungry—ugh!"

"Those fellows of the other day have got reinforcements," cried Frank, "for none of them could speak English then."

"Good Injun cold, run away from bad Injun," continued the man outside. "Lemme in, no hurt white man, all alone—cold; gimme suthin' to eat."

"He says that plainly enough," observed Ted, with a laugh.

"Go away!" cried Captain Chicks. "You are lying to me. You have friends outside, and want to get in here and steal."

"No lie; Injun good—no lie, no steal. Injun cold, hungry, most frozen—ugh!"

"Go away, or I'll shoot. Do you understand?"

"H'm! me 'stand. No shoot poor, good Injun. Gimme grub—gimme rum."

"Not a drop—not a crunch!"

"H'm! white man no good; him bad. Injun break door; make him gib rum, gib grub—let 'um hab fire to warm 'um."

"You will, eh? Well, you'd better get out of here or you'll find it warm enough, I'll warrant!"

The sound of voices had awakened the men, and seeing the captain at the door, gun in hand, they knew that something was up, and scrambled out of their bunks and hurried on their clothes.

"You're just in time," said the captain, as Wheeling, Manne, Jeff Tyler and the steward came forward.

"What's up?"

"There's a lot of these thieving savages outside, and they've got a fellow that can speak a little English to talk for them. He says he's alone, but I don't believe it."

"We heard at least half a dozen of them talking out there

before we awoke you, sir," explained Frank, "and beyond a doubt there are more yet."

"Lemme in?" grunted the man outside, inquiringly.

"No," returned Captain Chicks, making signs for no one to speak.

"Injun break um door down. Injun strong; Injun cold 'n' hungry."

"Go ahead, then."

The captain hurriedly whispered to those near him to stand aside, so as to allow the door to swing, but to remain in readiness to repress any attack that might be made.

All hands had gathered about the door now, and they were all around, and presented a most formidable army.

Advancing to the door, the commander suddenly took down the bar and sprang aside.

At that very moment there came a terrible pounding upon the door from without, as if the Indians were about to carry out their threat.

The bar being down, in came the door, all of a sudden flying wide open, and sprawling a most hideous and repulsive-looking savage flat upon the floor.

The black cat Grim, who had been awakened by the noise, and was now howling about between the men's legs, suddenly arched its back at the sight, its tail growing double its proper size, while it hissed and spat in the most terrible fashion.

The savage must have thought that the fiend itself was after him, for at sight of Grim, whose open mouth was on a level with his own, as he raised his head he uttered a yell, and sprang to his feet.

As the door flew open, those within beheld in the path outside, at least a dozen brawny savages, all standing ready for a rush, and doubtless there were as many more behind.

"Give it to them!" yelled the captain.

Those that had fire-arms discharged them, while Sam Salt seized the Indian in the room, and hustled him, neck and crop, out into the midst of his friends, who were thrown into terrible confusion by the human bombshell thus hurled into their midst.

Frank was not near the door, and was therefore quite surprised at Ted's suddenly pulling him down, and by hearing a bullet go whizzing past his head at the next instant and bury itself in the wall.

It could not have been aimed at the howling crowd without, or it never would have sped so wide of its mark.

No, it had been aimed at him especially.

"Who fired that shot?" cried the lad, quickly.

A man stood not far away with a smoking pistol in his hand, and a look of triumph on his face.

He had been the last one to fire, and the only one that could have sent that shot.

"It was he," cried Ted; "I saw him take aim."

"Spencer Tyrrell!" cried Frank. "That is the second time you have attempted my life, for now I know that it was you who tried before and failed."

At this terrible accusation a hush fell upon the whole company, while Tyrrell himself, recovering his composure, merely smiled, but it was a cruel smile, and one that boded no good to him upon whom it was bent.

CHAPTER VII.

THE CASE AGAINST TYRRELL IS NOT PROVEN.

"There is no time for quarreling now," cried the captain, sternly. "Get rid of these knaves before we do anything else, or we'll have the whole horde down upon us."

In fact, there was great danger of this; for although the Indians had at first retreated at the sound of fire-arms, they now began to swarm toward the door in great numbers.

Forgetting his difference with Tyrrell, therefore, Frank did his best to keep back the enemy, and so did Theodore and those nearest him.

Tyrrell evidently thought it best to do the same and let his hatred for Frank lie quiet for a time, as he, too, exerted himself, and no longer fired at the young man, but at the savage foe outside.

"Make a rush!" cried Captain Chicks, "and clear the passage of these brutes."

Then all hands, with newly-loaded weapons, made a grand sortie, firing in quick succession.

The Indians, surprised by the violence of the assault, fled in disorder, leaving the passage clear.

The whites then returned to the house, fastening the door securely so that the enemy might not break it in.

"What was that you said about Mr. Tyrrell, Frank?" demanded the commander, when this had been done. "You made a grave accusation against him, I believe."

"I said that he had attempted to take my life!" answered the young man, boldly.

"And I will swear to it," added Theodore, "for I saw him fire point-blank at Frank's head, and only for my pulling him down he would have been hit."

Spence Tyrrell said nothing, but his cruel smile told only too plainly that if he could have his wish both boys would be lying dead at his feet.

"And it is not the first time either," continued the young fellow, "for at the time that Frank saved me from being frozen to death this man tried to kill him."

"Can you swear to it?" demanded Captain Chicks.

"No, for I——"

"I thought so," said the villain, sneeringly.

"Let the boy finish what he has to say," interposed the captain, sternly, "and when he has finished you can speak. Go on, my lad," turning toward the boy.

"I was dazed at the time, and could not tell who the man was standing behind Frank with his rifle clubbed, ready to strike him, but there was one, and that I will swear to."

"Then it does not naturally follow that I was the one?" interposed Tyrrell again, with the same contemptuous manner as before.

"Silence, Tyrrell!" cried the captain, sternly. "I intend to get at the rights of this affair."

"I could see the man," the young fellow went on, "and I sprang half up, threw my arms about Frank's neck, and pulled him down, the blow falling upon the ice."

"That is true," said Frank, in a quiet tone which carried conviction with it.

"When we arose," the narrator went on, "we saw a man hastily retreating over the ice, being soon hidden behind the rocks. We could not tell who it was, as so many of our men dress alike."

"Then you could not swear it was Tyrrell?" asked the captain.

"No."

"Of course not!" laughed the accused. "I did not suppose you could, although I wonder that you did not try to force your lying story down our throats in spite of all reason."

"Will you be quiet, Tyrrell?" said the captain, quietly, but firmly. "I will give you all the chance you want to speak when I have heard the other side through."

"I could not swear, sir, that it was he," continued Theodore, "for I saw the man's face in a sort of daze, and just as I was recovering from the swoon in which Frank found me."

Tyrrell smiled, but said nothing.

"However, I firmly believe that it was he, and that he has designs against Frank's life, and to-night I am positive that he fired not at the Indians, but at us. Otherwise, how could the bullet have struck the frame of the house instead of going outside?"

A murmur ran through the little assembly, and many angry glances were cast upon Tyrrell, for Frank was a universal favorite, and he was not.

"I suppose that you never heard of any one getting excited during such a scene as we have passed through to-night, and shooting one of his friends by mistake?" said the man, quietly, but with that same sneer lurking in his tones. "The thing has happened in battle a thousand times, and is likely to happen again where men are overexcited. I do not claim to be any more cool and collected at such times than my fellows, and this thing is as likely to happen to me as to any one."

"I don't deny that, in the hurry and bustle of the late fight, I might have sent a shot toward my young friend"—he spoke these words with bitter sarcasm—"nor will I deny, even, that I did do it, it being very probable that I did."

"I do deny, most emphatically, however, that I did it with any direct intention. Why should I? What do I care whether the young man lives or dies? He is not necessary to my existence; his death can benefit me in no way; there is no reason why I should seek his life."

"Even supposing that I did, is it likely that I would do so when there was a great probability of my being discovered? Certainly not, and any sensible man will say the same."

"As I said before, you can show no motive, on my part, for desiring my young friend's life. He is nothing to me, and I could not do myself any good by taking such a step."

"As to the other occasion that his ill-advised companion alludes to, I must say that that statement is but a pack of lies, and not entitled to the least consideration whatever."

"We may dismiss that charge for lack of evidence," returned the commander, coldly and calmly, "although you have no right to charge the boy with deliberate falsehood."

"I do charge him with it, for all that," cried Tyrrell, fiercely. "Is my character to be taken away and my life put in jeopardy

by the idle tales of a nobody? I thought you had more good sense, sir, than to take stock in such rubbish!"

"The young man is sincere in what he says, and I do not believe that he has lied. However, as I have said, there is not sufficient proof to substantiate the charge, and I am not sure that he has made it."

"I said I believed such to be as I had stated," answered Frank, "but I cannot swear to it."

"As far as firing at this young sailor, and my very dear friend," Tyrrell proceeded, "I do not deny it. I only protest against having imputed to me a motive which never existed."

"Then you deny any intention of injuring Frank?"

"Most decidedly. He is nothing to me. No one can say that I ever showed him any hostility, or took more notice of him than of others in his position. Why should I, indeed? What have I to do with common sailors?"

Then the man turned away, as if the case were closed definitely, and he had no more to do with it, his manner indicating the most supreme indifference.

"My boys," said Captain Chicks, kindly, "Mr. Tyrrell admits having fired that shot which, fortunately, did no harm, but disclaims any desire to take the life of either, and I do not see why he should not be believed. There is certainly no proof, by reference to his former conduct, to show why he should wish to do you harm."

"No, there is no proof," answered Frank, laying particular stress upon the last word.

"And you will let this matter drop?"

Both boys readily assented to this.

"And apologize to Mr. Tyrrell for having accused him unjustly of a heinous crime?"

"I want no apologies!" returned Tyrrell, scornfully. "The matter is settled, and so let there be an end to it."

"If I have been unjust to Mr. Tyrrell, I am sorry to have been mistaken," said Frank rather ambiguously, leaving it to be inferred that he was not sorry at all that he had called attention to the man and put him upon trial.

The matter ended here, but Frank felt that his enemy had won for the present, and also that he had become more dangerous than before.

His own words had given an indication of this, and that the next time he would be careful to see that there were no witnesses about, and to make sure work of it.

"Keep a sharp lookout for him, Frank," advised Theodore, "for as sure as we are here he means mischief, and now that he has been found out he will be more careful."

The suspected man himself, as he lay in his bunk after the excitement had subsided, and there was no danger of the Indians returning, or at least no present cause of alarm, murmured softly:

"I must be more careful. The young dogs are sharper than I thought, and I must not expose myself. I beat them this time, but the captain sides with them, and the next time, if I fail, I may not face it out so easily. However, I shall not fail."

CHAPTER VIII.

A LIVELY BRUSH WITH THE INDIANS.

In the morning following the incidents just narrated a reconnoissance was made for the purpose of discovering if the Indians were still in the neighborhood.

No trace was seen of them, however, and it was decided that they had returned to the village or camp, wherever that might be.

The captain determined not to be led into danger through any false sense of security, however, and he therefore took measures to protect the house more thoroughly, and make it more of a fort than it was, in case of a fresh attack by their enemies.

All hands set to work, therefore, and built a high wall of snow and ice all around the house, leaving it in the centre of an inclosure some twenty feet each way, counting from the house walls to the embankments.

There was but one entrance through this stockade, and that was arched over at the top, and made narrow, so that but one man could enter at a time.

The walls were at least ten feet high, and too thick to be easily battered down, being made of cakes of ice laid one upon another in regular courses, snow being piled top and bottom to prevent their too sudden wearing away.

The work of building this novel stockade occupied most of the spare time for several days, during which the Indians had not appeared, many averring that they would not come again, and that the work of building the wall had been but a waste of

time.

This was not the case, however, as the added warmth and comfort of the house attested, the stockade greatly protecting it from the keen winds which so often swept around it.

The wall kept these off, and inside the inclosure the men could often take their daily exercise, and indulge in various recreations, when they could not have ventured outside on account of the icy blasts which prevailed.

That it was a protection in other ways was also soon made apparent, and the wisdom of the captain in having it erected, clearly shown.

One day, a week or so after it had been finished, the weather being not too severe to allow of the men venturing outside, Frank, Theodore, Sam Salt, Jeff Tyler and Mert, the black cook, started out for a walk.

The black cat, Grim, who had become attached to Frank by reason of the little dainties which the young fellow sometimes gave him, although he had not as yet entirely conquered his aversion to the cook, followed them a short distance, being evidently in want of a breath of air, although he walked daintily over the snow, as all cats do when afraid of wetting their feet.

He had hardly gone a dozen feet, however, when the whole pack of dogs that had been turned loose in the inclosure for exercise, espying their natural enemy, made a rush for him.

Grim did not want to try conclusions with them, being evidently in doubt as to his ability to cope successfully with the whole seventeen, but made at once for the ice stockade.

Up he went, tooth and nail, reaching the top successfully, where, with arched back and a tail twice its usual size, he stood hissing and spitting down at his canine foes below.

The dogs yelped, and barked, and vainly endeavored to get at Master Grim, but, not being able to scale the walls as he had done, were forced to content themselves with waiting for his descent.

Grim, however, after taking in the situation, scampered along the top of the wall, until, having distanced the dogs, who had not expected any such move upon his part, he leaped down and made a bolt for the house, into which he escaped unharmed.

"Them dogs wouldn't have minded having a supper out o' that black cat," remarked Sam, having witnessed the whole affair, which was comical enough, although it might have proved otherwise for Grim. "I just wonder how a cat stew would taste, anyhow?"

"About like rabbit," answered Jeff, "and I don't believe you could tell the difference if you was careful to leave the claws out."

"H'm! I guess I'd have to be a good sight hungrier 'n I am now afore I'd eat cat," retorted Sam, with a grin.

They had now passed outside the stockade by this time, and took their way toward the inland, when, upon arriving at the top of a slight incline, they beheld a party of thirty or forty Indians rapidly approaching.

As soon as they saw them, the enemy set up a shout and started in pursuit.

It is needless to say that our friends took to their heels in much the same manner as Grim had done when beset by the dogs.

It was necessary not only to save themselves, but to give warning to the others as well, for that the party intended to attack the fort was a matter of not the least doubt.

"Golly!" cried Mert, the cook, his eyes starting from his head, "dem Injun fellahs mean business, dey do; and dis niggah tink he'd bettah not 'tay."

"Gosh! they'll be making a stew out o' me afore I know it," exclaimed Sam, "and that won't do, you bet!"

"To the fort!" cried Frank. "We must give the alarm at once!"

Away they all scampered, the Indians hurling a shower of spears at them and following in swift pursuit, yelling and bawling like so many fiends newly set free from pendemonium.

The whites reached the opening in the stockade, and rushing through one by one, ran to the house and quickly gave the alarm.

Some of the men were in the inclosure and some in the house, there being no one away, as far as was known.

Frank met the captain in the doorway, and told him what the trouble was, and how narrow his own escape had been.

"Quick!" cried the captain; "the Indians are upon us; we have no time to lose."

All hands flocked outside, hastily seizing what means of defense lay nearest to hand.

The savages had come up by this time, but in their eagerness to enter had so crowded around the narrow opening, through which but one could pass at a time, as to make it an utter impossibility for any of them to get in.

This delay was of great value to the whites, and Captain Chicks was not slow to take advantage of it.

"Fire, my men!" he cried, pressing forward—"fire after me, slow and steady, and don't get excited."

Then he discharged his rifle through the narrow passage into the struggling mass of humanity beyond, and made way for the next.

This was Mr. Wheeling, and after him came Mr. Manne, and then the boatswain and carpenter, both firing together, one over the other's shoulder.

Every bullet took effect, as it could not but do where such a mark was presented.

Everybody who possessed a rifle or pistol fired into the heaving, surging mass, which now seemed as eager to get away from the entrance as it had before been to get through it.

The captain had reloaded before his turn came to shoot again, and, advancing to the opening, he stood for a moment undecided.

"There's not much need in killing any more of them," he said, "as they'll get out of here as soon as possible."

They could not press their way through now, as three or four dead bodies, piled one on another, choked up the entrance.

As those on the outside discovered the condition of affairs within, they hurried away, and in this manner those nearest the stockade had a chance to free themselves, which they did forthwith.

As the captain saw them hurrying away, he fired a last shot to hurry them more, and Tyrrell followed, bringing down his man with ease.

The Indians, perceiving that they would be obliged to enter the place singly, and also that as fast as one man entered he would be stricken down by the terrible weapons of the whites, saw the folly of trying to carry the fort by assault, and beat a hasty retreat, resolving to try some other mode of getting at their enemies.

They therefore withdrew to a short distance to consult, sitting around upon lumps of ice and talking most excitedly.

Meanwhile, the captain had suggested the piercing of loop-holes in the ice walls at various points, a thing which had not been done before, as no one had thought of it.

This was speedily accomplished by means of pikes and crow-bars, without doing material damage to the walls, the holes being made on three sides of the stockade, and numbering a little more than a dozen.

This had no sooner been accomplished than the Indians, having evidently concluded to scale the walls and attack the enemy at several points simultaneously, came bounding forward, spreading out so as to surround the place and get over on all sides.

"Here they come!" shouted Frank, catching sight of them through one of the loop-holes.

At once the men took their places, and, at a signal from the captain, discharged a volley at the advancing horde when they were but a short distance away.

The blazing forth of so many columns of fire at so many different points was something they had not expected, and leaving their dead lying on the snow as they had fallen, the survivors fled away, terror-stricken, the castaways being masters of the situation.

CHAPTER IX.

WHO WAS THE THIEF?—OPEN INSUBORDINATION.

There was no more trouble from the Indians, and as time passed on they did not re-appear, having evidently had all they wanted from the whites.

The bodies of their dead had been taken to one spot and buried in a hole in the ice, after being stripped of all that was valuable, some of their garments being of the best make and more comfortable than those worn by the whites.

Days merged into weeks, and as the enemy did not re-appear, our friends began to congratulate themselves upon being free from anxiety on that score, although there were other dangers in store which they knew not of.

The stockade had not been built in vain, and after that no one had a word to say against it.

As the time passed on, an old matter was suddenly revived, and this was no less than the mysterious disappearance of various articles of wearing apparel, supplies of food, and other things, the thefts being again noticed, and as being on the increase.

After the first appearance of the Indians it had been decided that they were the thieves, and that in the absence of the men from the house they had entered and helped themselves, but now, when not an Indian had been seen for a month, the thefts could not be attributed to them, and the affair became more mysterious than ever.

Not only were portions of the stores taken, but one of the sledges was suddenly missing, and nothing could be seen of it, high or low.

Neither could the thief be found, though every effort was made, and the men began to regard each other with suspicion, not knowing when the guilty party might be discovered.

At last the captain said, one day, angrily, when some new theft had been reported:

"This thing has got to be stopped, and if I hear of another case of anything being lost, if it isn't more than an old shoe, I'll have every chest searched, and if I find anything in any of them that does not belong there, I'll have the owner of the chest shot, as sure as my name is Chicks!"

Many of the men thereupon declared that they were willing to have their chests and bunks searched at once, in order to be relieved of any suspicion that might attach to them.

"Are you all agreed to have the thing done now?" asked the captain.

"It's not likely that any one will object, after such a call, sir," answered Tyrrell, with a harsh laugh, "and be suspected of wanting time to take the stolen articles out of their chests."

With these words, he gave such a look at Frank that no one could fail to notice it.

"Yes, let's have a search!" cried the carpenter. "Now's as good a time as any."

"Yes, let's have a search!" cried the men, conscious of their innocence.

The chests were brought out into the centre of the room, from under the bunks, and searched, beginning with that of the captain himself, for he was as ready to stand a trial as any one.

There was nothing in it but what he could swear to as being his, and thus the search proceeded, Wheeling, Manne, the doctor, Tyrrell, Warren, the boatswain, carpenter, smith, cook and steward following in order, no trace of anything wrong being as yet found.

Then Sam Salt, Jeff Tyler, and one or two of the seamen followed, and their belongings were found to be all right.

Frank then opened his chest, and right on top, in the tray, was a pair of gold-bowed eye-glasses belonging to the doctor, and a silver drinking cup owned by Joe, the cabin boy.

"That's all right," said the latter, blushing, as he heard a muttered exclamation from some of the men. "I loaned that cup to Frank."

"Did the doctor loan him his eyeglasses too?" sneered Tyrrell. "You may try to shield the thief, but the rest of us won't."

"He's not as much of a thief as you are, Spence Tyrrell!" cried Ted, forgetting all discipline in his indignation, "for you've been trying to steal his character as well as his life."

"Silence, Freeman," commanded the captain. "Remember that Mr. Tyrrell is your superior."

"Better open his chest too," muttered the engineer. "Perhaps he is in the same boat as his chum."

"Yes, open it!" cried the boatswain, carpenter, blacksmith, steward, and two or three seamen, in a breath.

"I'll save you the trouble," retorted the lad, throwing open his chest and throwing the contents on the floor.

Among the first things thrown out were two bottles of brandy, and a silver-mounted pipe, known to belong to the steward.

"I thought so!" cried Tyrrell, triumphantly.

"You did, did you? Well, as I don't drink nor smoke and everybody here knows it, it's very likely that I should steal these things, isn't it?" returned Theodore. "Nor does Frank use glasses."

"This is a bad case, my boy," remarked the captain gravely. "Joe," turning to the cabin boy, "speak the truth. Did you really lend Anderson your mug?"

"No, sir," returned the lad, "but he is welcome to it if he wants it, only I did not think he would steal from me, 'cause we've always been good friends."

"Do you think so, even now?" asked Captain Chicks, kindly.

"No, sir, I don't; hang me if I do," returned Joe, stoutly; "and it's all a plot, put against him by some one who hates him."

"I'll swear to it," added Frank.

"Of course you would," laughed the engineer. "Well, captain, are you going to keep your word, and make an example of these two fellows?"

The captain was greatly perplexed, for he had always been a strict disciplinarian, and had stated positively that he would severely punish the first man caught stealing, and yet he was as fully satisfied of Frank's innocence as he was of his own.

"What have you got to say for yourself, my lad?" he at length asked, bending a pitying glance upon the young man.

"I did not know that the things were in my chest, sir, and I did not place them there."

"The evidence is against him," cried Tyrrell, "and he ought to be made an example of."

"I deny it!" cried the captain, suddenly. "The things found here are not such as he would steal, for I will not believe that he is so hardened in guilt as to steal for the mere desire, and to take things for which he has no earthly use."

"Neither do I," echoed the doctor.

"Nor I," cried the first lieutenant, the ice pilot, and several others.

"I am the judge in this case, Mr. Tyrrell," continued the captain, eyeing the engineer sternly. "You hate that boy, I know, for I have watched you ever since he charged you with seeking his life."

"Oh, yes, you'll take his part, but if the stolen things had been in my chest, you would have been hard enough on me. This is discipline with a vengeance."

"Silence!" thundered Captain Chicks. "Let me get an opinion on this point. As many as believe this young man innocent, and the victim of a hideous plot, step to the right."

All the officers expect the engineer did so, and many of the sailors.

"Then I suppose I must infer that the others believe him guilty?"

"It looks that way," was the cynical reply of the engineer.

"And we outnumber you," added the captain. "The young man shall have the benefit of the doubt."

"Ted is no more guilty than I am, captain," said Frank, "and there has been a purpose in picking out us two and no others."

"I believe him innocent, Frank. Let the owners of these things take possession, and now put away your chests. There is an end to the matter."

"It's shameful," cried Tyrrell. "The young sneaks have been found guilty, beyond a doubt, and yet they are let go free. There's an end to discipline for you after that, and favoritism will reign supreme."

"Do you command here, or I, Spencer Tyrrell?" asked the captain, angrily.

"You are captain in name fast enough, but that's all," retorted the other, with unblushing impudence.

"And by Heaven! you'll find that I am in fact as well. Mr. Wheeling, Mr. Warren, put that man in irons. He is no longer chief engineer, but is degraded to the forecabin."

"I reckon it's the fo'c's'l that gets the disgrace," muttered Jeff Tyler, sotto voce.

As the two officers advanced to arrest Tyrrell, he sprang back a pace or two, and the men that had gone over to the right with him closed in before him and prevented the others from passing.

"Let any man dare to lay his hand upon me," blustered the scoundrel, drawing a pistol, "and I'll scatter his brains over the floor."

"Do as I bid you!" commanded the captain, quietly, "and seize him, if it takes all the men we've got."

"It will take more," stormed the mutinous engineer. "I owe you no respect, no obedience, Captain Chicks, so called, and I dare you to do the worst. Once an issue is raised, we will see who has the most power, you or I."

CHAPTER X.

THE MUTINY AND THE STRUGGLES FOR THE MASTERY.

As the brave captain saw himself thus openly defied, and his commands set at naught, he turned pale and quivered from head to foot.

Not with fear, however—for he knew not what that was—but with anger and righteous indignation at the thought of being thus impudently bearded by one whom he had always regarded favorably, or had done so until recently.

"Mr. Tyrrell," he said, in a calm tone, recovering his coolness with an effort, "are you aware of the seriousness of the offense you have just committed?"

"I did not know it was an offense to protest against favoritism and partiality," returned the engineer, in his most brazen manner.

"A dignified protest would not be, and I would be the last man to object to it, but your language cannot be called that. It was an insult, and more than that, you are attempting to stir the men up to mutiny."

"And suppose I am?" laughed the other. "We have a right to do as we please. We are not aboard the steamer now, and you have yourself shown that all discipline is at an end."

"I will show you your mistake, if that is your opinion. Mr.

Wheeling, Mr. Manne, seize this mutineer, and put him in irons."

The two officers sprang forward to obey this order, but Tyrrell leaped back and gave a peculiar whistle, at the sound of which several of the men rallied to his side.

These were Dickson, the boatswain; Smith, the carpenter; Woods, the blacksmith; John, the steward, and all the sailors and firemen, except Frank, Theodore, Sam Salt, and Jeff Tyler, so that Tyrrell and his followers outnumbered the captain's party by one.

As the two natives, the black cook and young Joe were in the latter division, they had really less fighting men than the mutineers, all of whom were capable of making it pretty uncomfortable for their enemies in a hand-to-hand fight.

"You see, do you, Chicks, that there are plenty more of my way of thinking?" asked the engineer, in his most impudent manner.

For a moment the good captain was nonplussed.

The whole affair was so sudden and startling that he scarcely knew what to think.

Recovering from his surprise, he turned to Tyrrell's companions, and addressed them thus:

"My men, have a care what you do. This is mutiny, just as much as though you were still on board the *Atlas*. Consider what you are doing. You are placing the lives of us all in jeopardy. If we do not support one another now, in our peril, we are lost."

"You've gone back on your word," blustered Dickson. "You said you would punish the thief, and you have let two thieves go."

"Have them two fellers shot, and we'll side with you," added the carpenter; "but if you let 'em go, I'm blamed if you won't get sick of your bargain mighty quick."

"It's not for us to ask for terms at all, my men," interposed Tyrrell. "We've got the upper hand, and we must keep it. If these fellows want to submit to us, let 'em make a fair offer."

"Hear me for the last time," cried the captain. "Are you resolved to stand by this traitor?"

"We are!" shouted every man of the mutineers.

"Then I must use force. Follow me, men, and seize this mutinous scoundrel."

At that the captain and his chief officers, Frank, Theodore, Sam, the doctor, Jeff Tyler, the black cook and even the cabin boy, made a dash at the mutineers.

So sudden was the assault, expected as it was, that for a moment the mutineers were forced back, and Tyrrell was actually in the hands of his enemies.

Frank dealt the carpenter a blow between the eyes that floored him, while Sam Salt caught the smith's head in chancery, and belabored him most unmercifully for a few moments.

Then there came the report of firearms, and Mr. Wheeling fell to the floor, badly wounded.

This caused him to release his hold upon Tyrrell, and in an instant the latter had wrenched himself free from Mr. Manne and rejoined his companions.

These had now recovered from their first surprise, and they now hurled themselves upon the captain's party with great violence.

Frank was thrown down, Jeff Tyler received a black eye, Sam Salt was hurled against the wall with such force that for a moment his breath seemed to have entirely left him, and the doctor and the black cook were tripped up and fell into a heap in one corner.

The mutineers were ready for anything, and Dickson roared out for the captain's life, his commander having struck the braggart a blow which felled him like an ox.

There is no doubt that blood would have been speedily shed had not the engineer restrained his men, and commanded them, with many oaths, not to further molest the enemy.

"You see I've got the upper hand, don't you, Chicks," he asked, "and that if I liked I could wipe out you and your whole crowd?"

The captain did not deign to make any reply to this vaunting speech.

"Now, what do you propose to do with those two young cubs that were caught with stolen goods in their possession?"

"Nothing. They were made the victims of a foul plot."

"Kill 'em both!" roared Dickson, "and burn the house over the heads of these duffers. We can get along without them; but let's see if they can get along without us."

"Shut up, you fool!" snapped the engineer. "Leave this matter to me. Now, then, Chicks, do you intend to do as I wish?"

"No."

"Then we'll make you. Charge 'em, boys, and capture that young sneak Anderson. I don't care about any one else, but we must have him."

Then the mutineers made another assault, both parties fighting with desperation.

The reports of firearms were mingled with the clash of steel; shouts answered shouts; groans, shrieks and yells were all united to make up the horrid din, while the air grew so thick with smoke that one could not see across the room.

Sounds as of heavy bodies falling to the floor were heard, and now and then a frantic cry arose above the awful tumult.

At last both parties ceased fighting, as if by mutual agreement, and withdrew to opposite corners of the room.

The two Esquimaux guides had been killed, Mr. Wheeling was mortally wounded, and Manne and the doctor badly hurt, the others having all received more or less serious wounds.

Tyrrell had received a fearful gash across his forehead, the marks of which would last as long as he lived.

Dickson's nose was broken, the steward had lost three of his teeth, one of the sailors had had two fingers shot off, and the rest were all more or less disfigured, though they were all alive.

Frank was still with his friends, however, the enemy having failed to secure him, and Tyrrell scowled like a demon when he saw him and realized that his plans had failed in regard to the young man.

The mutineers now outnumbered their forces more than ever, but they seemed to have had enough of fighting for the present, and Tyrrell saw that it would not be wise to urge them any further just then.

They remained in their corner, and the captain kept his, encouraging his comrades with cheerful words, and bidding them not to lose heart.

No further demonstration was made by Tyrrell's party, their leader commanding them under pain of his displeasure not to say or do anything to their late comrades, but to leave them entirely alone.

Thus the day passed, the captain, fearing another attack, keeping watch on his enemies, Tyrrell occasionally going out for some little time, and always returning with a smile on his cruel face.

Toward night Mr. Wheeling died, but neither Tyrrell nor any of his men paid the least attention to him, and seemed to care as little as though only one of the dogs had been taken sick and expired.

During the night the captain remained awake and on guard, bidding the men get what sleep they could, for they could not tell when they might be called upon, but toward morning the brave man fell asleep in spite of himself, and knew nothing for many hours.

CHAPTER XI.

DESERTED.

Frank was the first to awake and arouse his slumbering companions.

The captain was allowed to sleep, as he had had less rest than any of them, and stood greatly in need of it.

The first thing that Frank noted was that the corner occupied by Tyrrell and the mutineers was deserted.

None of the men were in their bunks either, and Frank came to the conclusion that they had gone out for their usual morning exercise.

The fires were still going, and Mert at once set about getting breakfast.

Frank and his chum made the wounded men comfortable, and as soon as it could be procured, gave them some warm, nourishing soup, which they greatly relished.

The rest then had their breakfast, Tyrrell and his men still being absent, though their loss was not a matter of regret, by any means.

After breakfast, Frank proposed that they go outside and see what had become of the absentees.

Sam Salt opened the door and uttered an exclamation of surprise.

The door opened inwards, and yielded readily to Sam's touch, but there was no passing beyond it.

The passage was walled up from top to bottom with ice.

Great cakes of it had been piled up in the outer passage, one upon another, excluding both light and air.

Frank, attracted by Sam's cry, ran to the door, and beheld the cause of his exclamation.

"So—so, that is why we did not see them this morning," he observed. "They have been amusing themselves, I see."

"They're a lot of fools," muttered Sam, "for while shuttin' us in, they've shut themselves out. Well, we can have things all to ourselves now, and won't we have a feast? I'll make a

bear-pie with sausage trimmings, and a pudding a la gardener, but you don't know what that is, of course. Joe, you young glutton, you'll do yourself a mischief eating so much. Gimme that!"

Thereupon the hungry fellow whisked out of the boy's hand a bone which he was industriously polishing off, and in an instant every scrap of meat on it—and there was plenty—disappeared down Sam's throat.

"Oh, you pig!" cried the boy, indignantly.

"Don't you say nothin'. You knowed the captain wasn't awake, or you wouldn't have dared to eat so much. Don't yer know that bones is dangerous? S'pose you'd got that one down yer throat and choked to death? Ye kin thank me for saving your life, ye young stubby!"

"This is a more serious matter than you think," said Frank. "We must have fresh air or we will stifle in here, so many of us together. Get a bar, Ted, and help me get some of this ice out of the way."

There was a bar under the captain's bunk, and there were three or four pikes, so that several could work simultaneously, and they set about it immediately.

After penetrating between two of the blocks, however, Frank discovered that there was another course of blocks beyond, and that without doubt the entire passage had been filled up.

All that could work did so, and before long the middle block was removed, the one above it remaining in its place.

"You'd better get that one down, too, Frank," suggested Mr. Manne, who, though unable to do much himself, watched the progress of the work with great interest, "or you may have it tumbling down upon you when you are working at the course beyond."

A few sturdy blows with the pikes loosened the cake in question, and it presently fell with a crash, narrowly escaping crushing the feet of some of the men, who leaped aside just in time to prevent such a catastrophe.

Frank and Ted then entered the opening formed by the removal of the ice, and attacked the next course, being relieved when they became tired by Sam Salt and Jeff Tyler, who in turn gave place to the cook and the cabin boy and they to Frank again.

The second wall of ice was removed only to reveal another one beyond it, and when Frank forced a bar between two of the blocks he struck still another layer next to that.

The entire morning was consumed in the removal of four different courses of ice, the outer ones being harder and thicker than the inner ones, and still the imprisoned party had not effected their release.

Then they stopped for dinner, and to take a much-needed rest, the working in a cramped position and among the cold ice having greatly fatigued them.

The captain, having awakened just as they were about to sit down to dinner, was told what had occurred and how they had been occupied.

A cloud passed over his face, but he merely said:

"You have done all that could have been done, and perhaps you were right not to awaken me."

There was evidently much more on his mind than he cared to mention, however, as a shade of sadness was frequently observed to pass over his face, but no one questioned him, and he said but little during the meal.

The dead officer and the two natives had been placed in their bunks and covered from sight that the appearance of the corpses might not be a constant reminder to the rest how soon they might meet a similar end.

After dinner all hands attacked the obstruction, Mr. Manne and the others that had been wounded being able to help somewhat, and everybody worked with a will, so that after an hour or so the wall of ice was pierced, and Frank and the captain stepped out into the inclosure.

Then, by being able to operate upon both sides, the whole passage was cleared, and the ice that had been left inside carried out and thrown into the inclosure.

There was no sign of any of the other party and Frank noticed that the shade on the captain's face deepened.

The door leading to the storehouse was open, and Captain Chicks led the way to it, still with that dark look on his face.

This was explained when they entered.

Nearly everything in the place had been taken out and carried away.

Not only that, but in one wall—what had never been seen before—there had been dug a smaller storeroom, and this was now exposed to view, although nearly empty.

Nearly empty, we repeat, for on the floor were articles which had long been missed, and which they now saw had been placed here.

A barrel of beef, a keg of spirits, and a few shirts—the captain knew all the articles, and knew, too, that they were among

the things formerly missed—lay upon the floor, and thus the secret was revealed.

There had been systematic thieving, and the stolen goods had been stored here until they should be wanted.

No wonder then that they could not be found before.

Just then the ice-pilot came running in, and said, in a tone of the most intense excitement:

"Captain, the dogs——"

"Are gone?"

"Yes, and the sledges; the shed is empty and the tracks of the sledges can be seen outside the stockade, which has been broken to admit of its passage."

"My God! I feared as much! Oh, the heartless villainy of these men! Better had we been all slain than to be abandoned thus."

"Good Heaven, sir! what can you mean?" cried Frank.

"I mean that we have been left to die by those fiends!"

"Deserted!"

"Aye! abandoned, here in this cruel land, with insufficient food, no means of getting away, and only a roof to shelter us."

"I see it all. Tyrrell and his friends have been robbing us day by day, and hiding away supplies necessary for their journey, and now they have taken dogs, sledges and all, and have left us."

"And while we were toiling away at the wall they built in front of our door, they may have been making their last preparations," added Theodore.

"I only hope they may all get twice as hungry as I ever thought of being," growled Sam Salt, in virtuous indignation.

"I knew the man was bad," mused Frank, "but I never thought to witness such a depth of wickedness. I fancied his spite was directed against me alone, but for months he has been plotting against us all, and now we have been heartlessly deserted. Could man ever be such a fiend."

"Got forgive him!" muttered the commander; "I cannot, for such vileness is beyond earthly pardon. If ever there was justice in Heaven, we may yet live to see the wretch punished for this crime. If he had desired to attempt an expedition in search of assistance and had asked for his share of the supplies, no one would have refused to let him take his chances, but—Oh, I cannot even bear to think of such diabolical treachery. Let us go into the house!"

CHAPTER XII.

THE FIGHT WITH THE WALRUS—THE LOSS OF FRANK.

It was too true.

Captain Chicks and his faithful friends had not only been cruelly abandoned, but the step had been contemplated and prepared for months before by the villainous Tyrrell and his evil-hearted adherents.

Upon looking over their stores, they found that they had food enough to last them little more than a month, but upon this they would have to depend solely, the animals having all disappeared long since.

The spring or time of breaking up of the ice was more than two months distant, so that they would be obliged to use everything with the utmost prudence, or die of starvation.

Without dogs or sledges it would be madness to attempt to leave the fort, and therefore they made a virtue of a necessity, and resolved to remain until the spring, at least, provided they lived until that time.

The party now consisted of the captain, Mr. Manne, and Dr. Warren, Frank, Theodore, Sam Salt, and Jeff Tyler, and the cabin boy and cook, nine persons in all, not to mention the black cat which Joe was so fond of, and which he could not bear to think of parting with.

"You don't eat much, do you, Grim?" the boy asked, addressing the animal; "and then you eat what we can't, and so we save in the end. You won't be afraid of the dogs now, will you, Puss? and if you see a bird or a mouse you can have it. Isn't that good?"

Grim rubbed his sleek, glossy side against Joe's face, as the boy bent down to him, and purred loudly for answer, at which they all laughed, for that black cat was as much a favorite in one way as the boy was in another.

As regarded clothing, that upon the backs of the party was good enough to last for some time, but none of them possessed a complete change, owing to the thefts that had been committed, so that it was necessary to take the very best care of what they had in order that it might not wear out too soon.

In the matter of fuel they were somewhat limited, but there were ten bunks of the absent mutineers, and these could be

broken up and burned as soon as the coal gave out, and if necessary, the board sheeting on the outside of the house could be used for the same purpose, although this would not be taken except in a case of emergency.

It being thus settled that there was no immediate danger, the party resolved to make the most of their circumstances, and remain cheerful and contented, despite their gloomy surroundings, this being the surest way to retain their health and be better able to combat their dangers when they came.

"Boys," said Captain Chicks, cheerily, one morning about a week after the departure of Tyrrell, "how would you like to go out for a hunt? It is not very cold."

"A hunt!" echoed Frank. "I should be delighted, I am sure, but what is there to hunt?"

"Oh, we'll have to find something," was the laughing answer, "but even if we don't we will have plenty of fun and lots of exercise."

Frank made no objection, of course, and so he, Theodore, Joe and Sam Salt accompanied the captain, the others being left at home to keep house during their absence.

Instead of striking inland as had been their usual custom, they started out upon the ice, much to Frank's surprise.

Keeping the house in sight, they marched across the ice, which was now a solid mass, with apparently no motion, for the distance of a mile, the air being cold and bracing, but lacking the sharp wind which would have been so disagreeable, and might even have prevented the excursion.

The captain, who was in advance, suddenly stopped, and pointing ahead, said in a whisper:

"I thought so."

"What is it, sir?"

"Do you see nothing, my lad?"

"Yes, I see a round hole in the ice."

"That is the breathing-hole of a seal, or perhaps a walrus; in fact, I think it is the latter. These fellows, though living under water, like to get a whiff of fresh air now and then, and hence these holes."

"Do you think it likely that one will come up?"

"Yes, but you must keep as quiet as possible, and not let yourself be seen, or we may miss him."

"Gosh!" remarked Sam, "I shouldn't mind having a good big walrus-steak fried in oil, a la Esquimaux, with hunkidori sauce, and a side dish of vis de veau Americaine to top off with."

Approaching the breathing-hole, the expectant hunters crouched behind the ice hummocks, and weapon in hand, waited the coming of the seal or walrus, whichever it might be.

An hour passed, and the boys were beginning to think that their labor would be in vain, when the captain suddenly held up his hand and made a warning gesture.

At that moment water was seen to fill the hole and flow out upon the surrounding ice, and at the next the head of an immense male walrus appeared above the opening.

They all held their breath and kept out of sight as much as possible, watching the huge animal, however, with the greatest anxiety.

Gazing all around him, and seeing nothing to arouse his suspicions, the huge creature flopped himself out upon the ice and lay at full length a few feet from the opening.

"We must not miss him," whispered the captain, "nor must we waste a shot. If I do not kill him, Frank, do you fire, taking aim for a point just under the forearm."

Raising his rifle slowly, the captain took deliberate aim and fired.

The report rang out with startling distinctness upon the awful stillness which reigned all about and when the smoke had cleared away the animal was seen lying upon the ice apparently dead.

"Hurrah!" cried Frank, forgetting the captain's caution and springing to his feet. "What a prize!"

Hurrying forward before his companions could stop him, the young fellow had almost reached the seemingly dead walrus when the latter suddenly rose up, and with bristling tusks and wide open jaw, made at the daring boy, full tilt, at the same time emitting a roar that might have been heard at the fort.

Surprised and terrified, Frank gave a sudden bound backward, before he noticed where he was going, his principal thought being to get out of the way of his enraged enemy.

A cry of horror went up from his comrades, who saw the danger he did not.

At the next moment he felt himself falling, and threw out his arms as a drowning man will do.

He had fallen right into the airhole, which he had forgotten in his excitement.

In an instant he had disappeared from sight.

In his fall his rifle caught on the edge of the hole and sustained his weight for an instant, but before his friends could interpose, his grasp upon it loosened, and he sank out of sight, the weapon remaining upon the ice above.

The walrus, missing his foe was now making direct for the airhole, which was his only means of escape.

If he ever succeeded in reaching it, poor Frank would be lost to a certainty.

"Stop him!" screamed the captain, frantically.

Little Joe, armed only with a pike, rushed headlong at the great beast, and plunged it into his flank to the depth of several inches, the blood spouting forth in a crimson stream.

The creature uttered a roar of pain, and turned upon his new enemy.

The boy was in deadly peril, for he could not run as fast as the walrus, and the latter was almost upon him.

Sam Salt was armed with a rifle, and quick as a flash, he threw it to his shoulder, and without taking aim, fired.

Chance, or rather Providence, must have directed the bullet, for it penetrated the animal's body just under the forearm, and entered a vital spot.

The creature fell forward weltering in gore, and Theodore, rushing up, drove his pike deep into its side, literally transfixing it upon the ice.

One fierce struggle and all was over, the great creature now lying dead before them, though it had been only by the turn of a hair that they had not all been sacrificed to his rage.

"Where is Frank?" cried Joe, suddenly, running to the place where their friend had last been seen.

They all approached the airhole and looked into its depths, vainly hoping to see their beloved comrade appear.

But no, there was not the least sign of him, and with sorrowing hearts they gave him up for lost, and turned from the sad spot with moist eyes and throbbing breasts.

CHAPTER XIII.

FRANK RE-APPEARS.

"Poor Frank!" murmured the captain. "I loved that boy as though he had been my own, and now he has gone from us!"

"He was the only friend I had!" sighed Theodore, "and now he's dead. I could have been spared better than he."

"Don't you s'pose he'll come up again?" asked Sam, gazing down into the dark water, as if expecting to see Frank rise to the surface any moment.

"Impossible," returned the captain. "The current has taken him under the ice, and the poor fellow has been drowned by this time. It wouldn't be possible for him to reach this place again."

"Well, I'm mighty sorry for him, anyhow. You're the cause of it all, you big brute!" he added suddenly, giving the carcass of the walrus a smart kick. "If it wasn't for you Frank would be alive now, and helping us skin you."

"Hallo! What's Joe up to?" cried Theodore, suddenly.

The boy had strolled away while they were talking, and he was now observed to be running over the ice, shouting and gesticulating in the wildest manner.

All at once the wind bore to them certain words which the boy was shouting.

"Help—Frank—alive—hurry up—help!"

"Frank is yet alive!" gasped the captain. "Quick! we must lose no time!"

The cabin boy, roaming over the ice in sheer desperation, and with the hopeless idea that he would somehow find Frank, had suddenly seen, in the distance, a dark object appear above the ice.

It arose to a medium height, staggered about for a moment, and then fell headlong upon the glittering surface.

One idea, and one only, took possession of the boy's mind.

Frank had succeeded in getting out from under the ice, and was lying there helpless and in danger of freezing to death.

How he had escaped he knew not, nor did he stop to think, the question of assisting the young fellow being uttermost in his mind.

He never for a moment thought that it might be a walrus or a seal or some other animal common to these regions, such an idea never having entered his head.

He thought of Frank, and Frank only, and as he sprang forward he shouted and waved his arms for the rest to follow.

This they did so quickly that he had hardly reached the object on the ice, and knelt down beside it, before they were up with him.

It was Frank indeed, whom they had never expected to see again.

He had been carried under the ice at a rapid rate, but having presence of mind enough to hold his breath and make no useless struggles, he was much better off than he might have been.

The swift-flowing stream bore him directly under a second air-hole some distance off, and by the merest chance he threw up one arm and arrested his progress.

Having a place to escape at, the water threw him to the surface, and in a moment he scrambled out upon the ice.

Drawing himself up, he attempted to shake the water from his dripping garments, and put some blood into his chilled limbs, for he was cold, notwithstanding that the water had not soaked through his clothes as yet.

He was too exhausted to make much of an effort, however, and after staggering around for a few moments he fell at full length.

In this manner Joe found him, when he came up, half unconscious and shivering like a leaf.

"Has anybody got any brandy?" cried the boy, as the others came up.

"I did not expect an accident of this kind," returned the captain, "and so brought none, but it will be safe to always carry a small flask of spirits when we go out."

Then lifting Frank to his feet with the assistance of Sam and Theodore, he said:

"We'll have to run him back to the fort as quickly as possible, for if the chill strikes in he'll never get over it. He may live, of course, but he'll never be the same boy he was."

Then, the captain on one side and Sam on the other, they ran him as fast as he could go toward the fort, never stopping themselves, never allowing him to stop, until they reached a shelter.

The result was that when they got within doors Frank was about worn out, but he was also in a perfect glow, the perspiration fairly running off him.

They had him undressed and into bed in a twinkling, and then the captain made him up a hot rum punch, which he forced him to drink almost seething, and which threw him into a more violent perspiration than before.

However, he soon fell asleep, and slept for three or four hours, awaking greatly refreshed, and with the sense of exhaustion entirely removed, Merton having a fine hot bowl of soup for him the moment he awoke.

"Well, Frank, my lad," said Captain Chicks, coming in, as he was eating it, "how do you feel? We've brought back the fellow that caused you all your trouble, and now we have meat enough and fat enough to last us quite a piece."

"I'm all right now, sir; but I had a narrow squeeze, and if you had not found me when you did it would have been all up with me."

"You must thank Joe for that, for while we were all giving you up for lost and mourning for you, he started off to hunt you up."

The walrus, after all the trouble taken to secure it, proved to be a valuable acquisition to their stores in many ways, for it would furnish food, clothing, light and heat and amusement.

The latter consideration was on account of the ivory the creature possessed, having two magnificent tusks, which the captain cut out and cleaned, and which all hands began immediately cutting up and carving into trinkets, ornamental and useful articles, and knickknacks, thus affording a means of agreeably passing the time they were forced to spend within doors.

"I'm going to make a pie-knife," said Sam, one night, while industriously polishing a bit of ivory he had carved, "for it makes me think of the bully wittles I used to have when I was a waiter in Lord Foodle's house."

"Waiting for cold grub at the back door, I suppose?" put in Joe, with a grin.

"Well, I don't s'pose, if you does. No, sir; we used to have mince pies that'd make your hair curl, tambourine pates to dream over, and plum puddin' a l'Anglais, what would give ye—"

"The colic, most likely," retorted Theodore.

"Shut up you. I tell you it was fine livin' at that place. One day we had oysters on the half plate, sauerkraut, wine, then pottage Frangipani and champagne, with roast pig and apple sauce—oh, my! pork and parsnips, liver and bacon—oh, dear! it makes me hungry to think of—stewed beef and spinach, and hash a la moutong. Then came more wine—Pomeroysack that was, and Vinegar de Portygal, and top o' that we had doughnuts and cheese, sweet apples and cider, pumpkin pie and hickory nuts. Tell ye, now, that was a dinner."

"I should say so!" laughed Joe. "If you ate all that I don't wonder you're as thin as a railroad restaurant sandwich. Such a combination, too—real high-toned and elegant."

"Now, you're laughing at me, you young vagabond, and I won't have it," and Sam made a dash for Joe, but only fell over a chest on which Grim was sitting, causing that highly intelligent cat to spit and arch his back in the most aggressive manner.

Besides the working in ivory, which was one means of keeping them occupied, the captain used frequently to talk with his comrades upon various topics, and would invite discussions, so as to bring out all the points of the matter under consideration.

He would also read aloud from the books saved from the ship's library, and talk of what he read, thereby making it more interesting.

Learning by accident one morning that it was Joe's birthday, he invited the lad to choose the bill of fare for that day's dinner, and at the feast placed him in the seat of honor at the head of the table, promising also to mark with equal distinction the birthdays of the different members of the party as fast as they came around.

"That's bad for me, then," muttered Sam, "for I was born on the 29th of February, and this is an off year for me."

"Very well; we'll make it the 28th, Sam, for we can't slight you any more than the others."

"If you only had the stuff to make it of," returned Sam, smacking his lips, "wouldn't I order a boss dinner! I'd have blanket of veal, hurricane of mutton, salmon of roast goose, macaroni of grating, filly of beef with champagne, turtle doves stuffed with bull-frogs, humming birds buttered with lard, patty de fore grass, and plum-duff oleomargarine. If that wouldn't be a dinner worth eating, then I hope I may never get another square meal."

Captain Chicks also assisted Joe and the young fellows to get up a minstrel entertainment and concert, Mert and Jeff Tyler being end men, Joe in the middle, Sam, Frank and Ted filling up the circle, the large and select audience consisting of the captain, the doctor and Mr. Manne.

The "Black and Tan Minstrels" proved a great success, and there were calls for a repetition of the entertainment, but as Joe said they must have something fresh, Frank got up a dramatic performance, and they produced a very queer version of "Uncle Tom," with Grim as the child, Mert as Eliza, Sam as the pious and much persecuted old darky, Joe being Eva, and Frank and Ted dividing the remainder of the characters between them.

Thus, by the exercise of a little tact, and by making the most of everything, the honest skipper contrived to keep the whole party happy, healthy and contented, while never a quarrel interrupted the serenity of this lovely life, and disputes and bickerings were never dreamed of.

"I'll bet a hat that Spence Tyrrell and his crowd don't get along half as well as we do," remarked Sam, speaking upon this point, "for I'll wager anything that somebody's allus kicking up a fuss. They're jest that kind of fellers, all of 'em, and I wouldn't be in that crowd for a whole roasted ox!"

CHAPTER XIV.

DISCORD—TREACHERY—A BASE DESIGN.

Sam Salt could not have stated the case more correctly had he been with Tyrrell and witnessed the manner in which he and his men got on together.

The dogs themselves could not have snarled more than they did, and arguments, disputes and quarrels were going on from morning till night.

When the party set out they took all the boats but one, having to leave that behind for want of a place to put it, the sledges being well loaded as it was.

Tyrrell would have destroyed it, but some of the sailors were taken with a fit of tender-heartedness and hid it away instead of breaking it up, as they were ordered.

By means of the stolen instruments, they were enabled to lay their course, which was toward the south, along the American coast, the plan being to cross the Upernavik as soon as the ice broke up, and from there get passage on some Danish ship.

For a week or so they got on with comparatively little squabbling, but after that quarrels were of almost constant occurrence, Tyrrell making no effort to stop them and keep the men in order.

During the day they would travel by the sledges, and at night erect a shelter, cook their meals, and take a rest of eight or ten hours.

One day Tyrrell pushed on longer than usual, there being no good place to stop, in his judgment, and the journey being continued until he should find one.

It was two hours after their usual time for stopping when the boatswain, who was in charge of one of the sledges, stopped his sledge, released the dogs, and began to prepare for a halt.

Tyrrell instantly stopped, turned back, and leaping from his sledge, demanded to know, in terms more vigorous than elegant, who had given the boatswain authority to halt.

To which the latter replied that he thought his judgment was as good as anybody's, and he would be blessed if he was going to ride all night without anything to eat and run the chance of being frozen to death.

"Well, suppose you wait for orders," stormed Tyrrell. "I want you to understand that you haven't a sqfty like old Chicks to deal with, and that I'm the boss of this crowd."

"You're not bossing me, then," returned the other, "and you had better not let that idea run away with you, for if it does you'll get left. I consider my judgment a good sight better than yours in this matter, and I'm not to be taught by a fellow that knows less than me about the Arctic."

Tyrrell, rushing suddenly upon Dickson, struck him a blow in the face which floored him.

Recovering his senses, but not his feet, in a few moments, Dickson whipped out a revolver and, still lying on the ice, sent a bullet whistling through the top of the engineer's hood, narrowly missing his scalp.

Tyrrell drew his own weapon, and blood might have been spilled had not Woods, Smith and the steward interposed and prevented the irate engineer from firing.

"What's the matter with you, Spence?" said Woods, who was on terms of intimacy with the engineer. "This is as good a place to stop as any. There's a bluff here which keeps off the wind, and we're all used up, dogs and all. Put up your shooter and listen to reason."

"Do you think I'm going to let any duffer draw a pop on me without resenting it? I'll have that fellow's blood if it takes every drop of my own. I wasn't raised up here, and I've got hot blood, I have."

"Go sit on an iceberg and cool off, then!" was the impudent retort of the boatswain, who had now risen and stood defiantly glancing at Tyrrell. "If your mother had set yer on a paving stone when ye was little and got cranky, you'd know how to behave yourself now. Bah! you ain't fit to light fires with. Hot! Why, you'd smother the fire if you was put on it."

This retort only increased the bad blood between the two men, and had it not been for the strenuous efforts of the friends of both parties a pitched battle would then and there have taken place between them.

The matter rested for that night, and the camp was formed, and the evening meal prepared and eaten in silence.

The insults which he had received rankled in Tyrrell's breast, and he hardly slept a wink all night for thinking of them.

While two of the sailors were getting breakfast ready, he arose, left the tent, rifle in hand, and came directly upon Dickson, no one else being in sight.

With eyes inflamed with passion, and lips fairly foaming, the scoundrel raised his weapon instantly and fired, taking the boatswain in the middle of the forehead.

He fell as he was in the act of grasping his own weapon, this being discharged by the shock.

Tyrrell instantly whipped the revolver out of the man's hand and fired two shots through his own clothes, throwing the weapon on the ice as though it had fallen from the man's hand.

Everybody that was up came running out to see what was the matter, the reports indicating that there was trouble brewing.

Dickson was found on the ice dead, the ball having penetrated his brain and caused instant death.

"The scoundrel fired twice at me when I came out," blustered Tyrrell, "and I shot him in self-defense. You can see where the bullets passed through my clothes."

There had been no witnesses to the affair, and all the evidence there was seemed to confirm the murderer's statement.

Dickson was known to have gone out first, and without Tyrrell's knowledge, and the supposition that he had waited for and waylaid the engineer was not without color.

Then, too, his weapon had been discharged two or three times, and Tyrrell's but once, which seemed to show that he had fired more than once upon Tyrrell before the latter had retaliated with the shot that had killed his assailant.

"Served him right, too," growled the smith. "He was a mutinous scoundrel, and we are well rid of him."

The friends of the dead man buried his remains in the snow, and half an hour afterward the march was resumed, and kept up all day.

That night the carpenter and the steward had an altercation, and had a lively bout at fisticuffs until Tyrrell interposed, knocking them both down, and declared that he would horse whip the next man he caught fighting.

The next morning, however, two of the men got into a dispute over their food, one of them being the smith, and came to blows, when Tyrrell, who chanced upon the scene with a cigar in his mouth, said nothing to Woods, but sent his opponent flying, by a well-directed kick in the pit of the stomach, follownig up this brutal act by laughing and stroking his goat-beard.

There were not as many fights after this, for a time, at least, but there were constant bickerings and disputes.

How different from the manner in which Captain Chicks and his companions conducted themselves.

The march was prosecuted as rapidly as possible, but there were times when it was impossible to proceed, and then, snugly sheltered beneath the tent and wrapped in their warm sleeping bags and lying before the fire, the men would spend whole hours in gambling.

Time passed on, and the death of Dickson seemed to have been forgotten in the excitement of the march along the coast, or at least it was never mentioned.

There had been so many detentions on the way that at last Tyrrell, scoundrel that he was, determined to take a desperate step, and calling the blacksmith to his side one night when they were about to form their camp, he said, bluntly:

"Woods, there won't be grub enough to last us all, if we don't hurry, and, in fact, I don't think there will be in any event."

"I am sure of it. There's a big party of us, and we didn't save everything from the vessel in the first place."

"Then our party has got to be reduced, that's all there is about it. Do you understand?"

"Yes; those that's agreeable to you you're going to take along, but the rest is going to share the fate of the captain, and be left behind. It's a pity if I don't understand."

CHAPTER XV.

THE PLOT SUCCESSFUL—THE WARNINGS OF THE DEAD.

"That's it exactly," muttered the villain. "They're to be deserted."

"Who's going on ahead besides you and me?"

"The steward, and Brown, and Jones, making five altogether. The other seven can stay behind and suck their thumbs."

"How are you going to manage it? They'll outnumber us if it comes to a fight."

"I'll see to that, if you'll warn the rest. We don't want a crowd, and we've got to get rid of some of 'em."

The heartless villain then began arranging his plans, and in the meantime Woods quietly informed the men designated of the movement that was in view.

Thoroughly selfish, and caring nothing for aught but their own interests, these men readily agreed to assist in carrying out any plot that might be settled upon, and if blood-shed were a necessary feature, were not the less willing.

Woods reported progress to his principal, and Tyrrell made known a portion of his plans, being too suspicious to tell them all to one who might possibly see it to his advantage to betray him, and catch him in the trap he had set for others.

The coffee that night was unusually strong and hot, and it was observed that neither Tyrrell nor the blacksmith drank any, although they were usually very fond of it.

Brown and Jones always took tea, morning and night, and the steward was busy at the fire, so that it was not noticed what he drank.

The carpenter, after finishing his meal, lit his pipe and sat in a corner to smoke and enjoy himself, but he had hardly taken a dozen puffs before the pipe fell from his grasp and he rolled over fast asleep.

One of the sailors was already asleep, and the others began to show signs of drowsiness, being scarcely able to hold up their heads.

Tyrrell and the smith exchanged expressive glances, when one of the sailors, who appeared to be considerably less drowsy than the rest, sprang up and cried out:

"What have you imps been doing? I'll take my oath you've been up to mischief. I see it in your watery eyes, Tyrrell, and in your pale face. What treachery is it now? You daren't murder us openly, and you're trying some secret game."

Tyrrell's face was livid as he sprang up to meet the angry sailor, who cast a glance all around him, and said:

"You've put poison in the food, or—aha! I see, in the coffee, and that's why you didn't drink it. By the powers of evil! if I am to die, I won't be alone."

Then with drawn knife he sprang toward the traitor, intending to kill him at one blow.

And so he would have done had it not been for Woods, upon whose assistance he relied.

The latter whipped out a pistol, and at the very moment that the furious sailor was about to plunge his knife into Tyrrell's heart, having already seized him by the throat, despite his resistance, a bullet whizzed through the air and struck the man in the back of the head.

He fell to the ground in convulsions, dragging Tyrrell after him, and so fierce was his grasp upon the latter's throat, that he had liked to have choked him, dead as he was, his fingers having to be disjointed before the clasp could be loosened.

The drugged sailors did not awake, despite the noise and confusion, and Brown, glancing around with an expression of awe, said nervously:

"Wur it p'ison ye put in the coffee?"

"No, only something to make 'em sleep," laughed the steward, coming up at that moment. "They won't wake under twelve hours, with that dose in 'em, Mr. Tyrrell."

Thus it was the engineer who had thought of dosing the coffee, and had taken that means of quieting his enemies rather than meet them in fair and open fight.

He had taken an ounce of laudanum from the doctor's case of medicines, and given it to John to put in the coffee, and all who had drank it were now fast asleep.

The dose was not sufficient to kill, but merely to cause sleep, though the villain had not refrained from killing his victims from any pure motive.

He had been afraid that too great a dose would have the contrary effect, and keep the men awake, and that was the real reason why he had given them just enough to send them to sleep.

"We'll have time enough to make ready," he muttered. "If this fool here had gripped me a little tighter I wouldn't have any preparations to make."

Then he spurned the body of the dead sailor with his foot, like the brute and coward he was, and turned away.

The drugged men slept all night and well into the morning, but long before they awoke their treacherous companions had departed, taking everything with them, and leaving the sleepers lying on the bare ice, to awake or not, as the case might be.

The tent, the sledges, all the supplies, and all the extras belonging to the men were taken—nothing being left them but the clothes on their backs.

The carpenter and the sailors never awoke, but the rest aroused themselves at last, cold and hungry, and found that they had been abandoned.

The truth dawned upon them, and with heavy hearts they scraped the snow together, covered up their dead mates, and followed the track of the sledges.

One man had a small flask of whisky in his pocket, and this he divided, fearing that if he did not his companions would kill him to obtain it.

Hungry and cold, footsore and wretched, the four men toiled on through the dim light, the sky being obscured and the aurora giving but a fitful light, until one fell down exhausted, declaring he could go no further.

"This is a judgment upon me for listening to that traitor and deserting my kind captain," he cried. "Now I am myself deserted. A curse upon the villain who has brought this upon me. May he come through this same path himself and know the bitterness of death in this cruel land, without friends, without hope, either in this world or the next!"

His comrades tried to persuade him to go a little further, but he urged them to leave him and try and reach some shelter before they all perished.

Then they lifted him up and carried him, although they themselves were worn out and scarcely able to get on, without this added burden.

At the end of an hour they were forced to stop and rest, and then, as the wind was blowing keenly, they dug a hole in the snow, covered themselves up and went to sleep.

They had not been careful where to dig, and, being exposed to the wind, part of the drift was blown away, and the sick man and another were frozen to death, being found by their companions when they awoke.

There were now but two left, and these, taking the outer coats of their dead comrades, pushed on in the vain hope of overtaking Tyrrell and his party.

The sledge tracks had been obliterated, and it was impossible to follow the trail except by guess, there being little to guide them where everything was so monotonous.

They found some moss under the snow and ate it, and they chewed upon strips cut from their fur coats, thereby keeping death away for a time, although they could not stay him from ultimately seizing them in his icy grasp.

Following the line of the coast, they pushed on as fast as pos-

sible, hoping to meet either with Esquimaux or to come upon an animal of some sort, all hope of again seeing Tyrrell having departed.

After a long and dreary march of many hours, they came upon the spot where the fugitives had last encamped, and digging in the snow, found a few miserable scraps of food that had been thrown away.

These they eagerly devoured, and searched for more, but all in vain; and then, a strong wind and snow setting in, they buried themselves deep in a drift and passed many hours in troubled sleep.

At last they dragged themselves out, and once more took up their trail, even hoping that they might meet the hostile Indians, feeling sure that the latter, although they might take them captive, would at least give them enough to eat.

But no such good fortune was in store for them, and they toiled on, looking more like skeletons than men, from want of food, exposure to the cold, and other sufferings; but still they persisted, almost defying death, and sustaining themselves by their will power alone.

Even that could not stand against what they had to suffer, and one of them went mad, and cutting a deep gash in his arm, sucked the blood that spurted forth, the better to sustain life.

He had severed an artery in his madness, and now, weak from loss of blood, he fell upon the snow, while his companion, not daring to look upon him, lest he should be too greatly tempted, hurried from the spot, and never once paused until many a weary mile had been passed.

Then seeking refuge at the bottom of a snow-drift, where he unexpectedly found a quantity of edible moss, he composed himself to sleep, murmuring to himself:

"Spence Tyrrell, you villain, you have much to answer for, and I pray that I may never meet you, for if I do, as sure as I breathe, I'll take your life, and I've sins enough now to answer for! Look to it that you don't meet the same fate as the poor fellows you abandoned, and God have mercy on me for the part I took in the first desertion!"

Then he dropped off to sleep; but even there he was better off, and in a safer place than Tyrrell, the miserable villain that had brought him to all this.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE RUNAWAYS MEET WITH A MISFORTUNE—TYRRELL'S FEARS.

Fancying himself secure from all anger, and sure to reach a comfortable shelter before long, Spencer Tyrrell felt no qualms of conscience, no regret for the crimes he had committed, no apprehension for the future.

He was not the first man who, in the insolence engendered by his success in evil doing, has scouted the idea of a just retribution for all wrong, but who, in the very arrogance of his success, has been suddenly thrown from his high state, and brought before a righteous Judge, who never allows those who have defied His laws to escape their final punishment.

It was not long after the treacherous and cruel abandonment of his late companions, when one night, as the retreating party encamped in a collection of deserted Esquimaux huts, or igloos, that a severe snow storm arose which detained them for many days.

In order to procure fuel to keep themselves warm, their supply having given out, they were forced to break up the sledges and put them on the fire, and, when these were used up, to demolish two of the boats, leaving but one with which to eventually make their escape.

The snow storm kept them from continuing their journey, and greatly reduced their stock of provisions, every day they remained inactive counting for another on the road, during which they would, of course, be obliged to eat.

"We don't need all these dogs now," exclaimed Tyrrell, on the fourth night of their enforced stay at the igloo, "for half the number will draw us just as well as the whole. We'd better let some of 'em go, and then we won't have to feed 'em."

"Perhaps it wouldn't be a bad idea to let somebody else loose besides the dogs, to save the trouble of finding them," suggested Woods.

"You mean Brown and Jones?" asked Tyrrell, it being unnecessary to add that the two speakers were alone, the rest inhabiting the other igloos.

"Yes; you and me and John is good enough, but them fellows eats more than they're worth."

"We could snow them in, some night, and by the time they dug themselves out we'd be far away," answered Tyrrell, as coolly as though he were proposing something new for breakfast, and not plotting against the lives of his fellow men.

"That'll do, and as soon as this weather seems like moderating, we'll carry it out."

"We probably have not so very far to go," remarked Tyrrell, "as the presence of this abandoned village indicates, but it might be a long time before we could cross over to the other side, and we want all the provisions for ourselves and not to feed a lot of lazy louts and a pack of dogs we don't need."

In fact, the mutineers had been prodigal with their provisions at first, and that was why they were now beginning to see the necessity of retrenching.

The snow at last stopped, and Tyrrell foreseeing that it would do so, made his preparations for flight, assisted by Woods and the steward.

They packed everything on the one remaining sledge, putting the boat on crosswise, and harnessing the dogs, so as to be in readiness to start at an instant's notice.

The two seamen slept in separate igloos, and when everything was ready, the men having gone into their huts to get something which Tyrrell pretended to want, the signal was given.

Upon the instant Woods began to block up the entrance of one hut and the steward the other, big clumps of ice having been prepared for that purpose beforehand.

The entrances being small, it took them but a little while to close them up, and then Tyrrell helped his companions to cover them with snow and to pack it down hard with their feet.

The men within, apprehending that some act of treachery was going on, shouted and kicked, and tried to get out, but all in vain.

They could not assist each other, being in separate huts, while their enemies could work in concert, and thus had a great advantage over them.

"That'll do," laughed Tyrrell, stroking his beard; "if they do get out, they'll be so far behind us that they can't catch up to us. Now, off we go, and good day to those fools!"

The three men leaped upon the sledge, Tyrrell cracked his long whip, and away started the dogs at a lively pace, over the ice and over the snow, soon leaving the igloos far behind.

Tyrrell managed the dogs fairly, and the latter kept upon a tolerably straight course, avoiding ice hummocks and other obstructions, the sledge running smoothly and jolting but little.

The best-laid plans of mice and men sometimes fail, and the present was an instance in point.

It might have been two hours, more or less, from the time of departure, when the dogs struck a steep down grade, and put forth all their efforts to keep the sledge from running upon their heels.

Just at the foot of the decline, however, was a considerable mass of rough ice, which lay directly in their path.

Tyrrell saw this, and, cracking his whip vigorously, tried to turn the dogs off to the right, so as to avoid a collision.

Either the little creatures were determined to follow their own bent, or they were unable, at the pace they were going, to change their course so suddenly; but, in any event, they kept straight on, and in another moment there came a crash.

The sledge was overturned, the three men went flying through the air, and away scampered the dogs, still dragging the sledge after them.

Woods went head first into a snow-drift up to his heels, the steward rolled into another, and was nearly covered up, and Tyrrell fell upon the ice and broke his leg, being unable to move, and suffering great agony.

He raved and swore, called to the dogs to come back, and expended a great deal of vitality in useless fuming and fretting, but all to no purpose.

The lines by which the dogs were attached to the sledge snapped or came away on account of the front bar of the sledge breaking off, and away they scampered in a body, leaving the broken and overturned sledge far behind, while they kept on as though their lives depended on covering the greatest distance in the shortest space of time.

John succeeded in extricating himself, and then rescued Woods by pulling at the latter's heels until he dragged him out of the drift, very red, very cold, and as cross as a bear.

They whistled and shouted and swore and stormed, but all to no purpose, as never a dog turned back, and before long the whole pack became mere white specks in the distance, and presently were lost to sight altogether.

The sledge lay on the ice nearly half a mile away, having been dragged that distance before it broke loose, but, as it was not likely to go any further, they let it stay there for the present, and turned their attention to their wounded comrade.

His leg had not been badly broken, that is, it was only a simple fracture, but it was, nevertheless, necessary to attend to it at once, or it might give him considerable trouble.

He could not move himself, and so they lifted him as gently

as was possible, and, spreading their great coats out upon the snow, laid him in a more comfortable position.

"This is a pretty state of affairs!" he said, with a growl—"laid up with a broken leg, the dogs run away, and no means of getting out of this God-forsaken region. I never had such luck in all my life."

"Maybe they'll come back," suggested Woods.

"And maybe they won't, and that's more likely. Can any of you fellows set my leg?"

"I can, if it's not badly broken," answered the steward; "but when it's done you'll have to lie still until it knits, and that may take a month."

"Well, I don't see how I can help myself. However, make me as comfortable as you can, and then build a house, for if we've got to stay here we must have things ship-shape. You won't desert me?" he whined.

Aye, well might he think of that now, when he was helpless, but why had he not thought of it before, when he had so wickedly abandoned his late companions?

"We ain't going to leave you," said Woods, "so you needn't be scared. We don't know the way, and you do, and it ain't likely we're going to run our heads into a noose, just for the sake of spite."

"Shut up!" growled the steward, "and by and by we'll all get out of this."

Did he speak the truth?

Time will show.

CHAPTER XVII.

BACK FROM THE DEAD—A TERRIBLE QUESTION.

There was not material enough at hand to build a house, and therefore it was deemed best to construct a rude shelter with its back to the point from which the wind generally came.

First, the sledge was broken up with the axes and the two runners imbedded deeply in the snow, end up, and made firm with blocks of ice.

Then the boat was placed behind these, being gradually raised by placing blocks of ice under either end until its gunwale rested on the tops of the runners.

Thus it formed a roof, and being lashed firmly in place, and the back wall of ice being filled up, a piece of sail-cloth was stretched over all, and fastened down by blocks of ice and a bank of snow.

The sides of the hut were made of ice, the stakes of the sledge, and sail-cloth, and the front of the oars, slanting from the boat to the ground, and covered over with the tent-cloth.

It was just large enough for the three to move about in, and was tight and as warm as could be expected, and, at any rate, was better than sleeping out of doors.

When the house was about half finished, so that Tyrrell could go in, he was moved thither, and placed on a couch of blankets and furs, in as easy a position as possible, and then the steward undertook to set his leg.

It was not an easy task, for the man was impatient and would not bear the least pain without making a terrible fuss, all of which greatly increased the latter's labors.

At last he became angry, and said, in a very decided tone:

"Now look here, Tyrrell, if you want me to make a botch of this job, so's you'll always have trouble with this leg, just you keep on worrying and fretting and acting like a baby, but if you want me to do as well as I can, just hold your confounded jaw, or I'll wish that had been broken and your neck, too, in the bargain."

"But you hurt," whined the bully, the steward's way of talking being something new from an inferior.

"I suppose I do, but I can't help that, 'cause I ain't a reg'lar surgeon, and you make it worse with your squirming, and if you don't keep still and behave like a man, darn me if I don't give up the job and let the thing mortify and fester and gangrene and everything else, till it carries you off to blazes."

"No, no, don't do that," whimpered the coward, the thoughts of death being anything but pleasant to him; "do your best—that's a good fellow, but don't hurt any more than you can help."

After this the steward got on better, and the leg being reset and bound up in splints, was straightened out and supported on the cover of an old chest, that presenting a smooth surface, and not apt to give way.

The house was then finished and was quite habitable, affording a shelter from the wind, and capable of being made quite warm and comfortable.

The accident to Tyrrell might detain them six weeks—it would altogether depend on how his leg got on—but as this

would bring them nearer to the time of the breaking up of the ice, it was not perhaps so unfortunate, as they then could use the boat, which they would otherwise have been obliged to leave behind as being unable to take it along.

"We ain't so bad after all, if it wasn't for that leg of yours," remarked Woods, "only we've got to be saving with the grub, and if we do see anything to shoot we must shoot it."

"And you won't abandon me in this helpless condition?" asked Tyrrell, abjectly.

"Oh, shut up! You make me sick!" growled Woods, thoroughly disgusted. "You don't think nothin' of desertin' other fellers, and killin' 'em, too, in a sneakin' kind of way; but you're awful scared when ye think it's coming your turn. Ye're a durned calf, Spence Tyrrell, that's what ye are, and if you go to bellerin' again, durned if I don't cut stick and leave ye right here!"

He had no intention of doing so, of course, but the threat quieted the miserable scoundrel, and he had no more to say.

There he was, unable to get up from his couch, obliged to have all his meals placed before him, remaining indoors when the others were out, and dependent on them for everything; so that, if they should take a notion to abandon him, he could not help himself.

"Confound the luck!" he would mutter at times. "The idea of my being cooped up here, when I ought to be making for the south. If those beasts of dogs hadn't run away I could go in the sledge, but now I am as badly off as old Chicks and those fools that stayed with him."

Four or five days had passed when one afternoon, when the wretched man was alone in the hut, his comrades having gone out on the ice to try and catch a seal, or some other kindred animal, some one entered.

He did not look up at first, thinking that one of the men had returned, but a sudden exclamation of surprise from the newcomer caused him to raise his head.

"Spence Tyrrell, by all that's bad!"

Tyrrell looked up and beheld one of the party that had been drugged and abandoned some little time before.

It was the one survivor of that unfortunate five, Jack Clayton, the man who had cursed Tyrrell in his agony, who had been spared when he had thought death at hand, and who had now come upon his enemy, helpless and alone.

That long snow storm, which had delayed Tyrrell in the igloos, had also prevented him from going out, but it had saved his life, for the increased weight of snow had augmented the warmth of his burrow in the drift, so that nature had been kinder to him than his fellow man.

He found a quantity of edible moss under the snow, and with this and the tobacco in his pocket which he chewed upon constantly, and by gnawing upon strips cut from his sealskin boots he had managed to keep life in him, though, of course, he was haggard and wan, and looked more like a ghost than a human being.

When at last the snow had ceased to fall he had continued his journey, having now some little hope of overtaking Tyrrell, or, at least, of meeting with humans like himself, though why he thus hoped he could hardly tell.

One day, when nearly worn out, he came upon a collection of ice-huts—the same occupied by Tyrrell—one of which was broken open at the top.

In this one of the two sailors abandoned by Tyrrell had been imprisoned, and breaking out, had attempted to follow the villain.

He had released his comrade; but only a short distance off Jack Clayton found them lying on the snow, frozen to death, an empty spirit flask tightly clasped in the hand of one of them.

When they had been shut up there had been food and this bottle of liquor in the huts, Tyrrell being ignorant of the fact.

When Brown had broken out and released Jones, the two, thinking nothing of food, had emptied the bottle between them, and, in a state of helpless inebriety, had fallen on the snow and met their deaths.

Jack found the food left in the huts, and welcome enough it was to him in his desperate and half-starved condition.

There was some fuel, too, and upon one of the dead men he found a tin box of water-proof matches, each of which was worth a thousand dollars to the poor, abandoned castaway.

Selecting a hut which was small, whole, and warmer than the rest, he took thither his food and fuel, carefully garnering every scrap, for it was all of inestimable value to him, he made a fire, and enjoyed the first real pleasure that had fallen to his lot for many a day. There was enough spirits in the flask, when thawed out, to allow him a good-sized tumblerful, and that which had caused the death of his comrades, because used to excess, was, in his case, the means of imparting new strength, of restoring his life.

That he might not be tempted to cannibalism—and he would not have been the first by any means in adopting this course for the sake of saving his life—he buried the bodies of his late comrades under the snow, only reserving their warmest garments for his own use, as they would have no possible need for them now, and taking care of such little valuables or keepsakes that they possessed, in order to give them to their friends and relatives when he reached home, which he now had more hope than ever that he would do, although again he could not tell why he felt so.

The food, the liquor, the fire, the shelter, and above all, the hope newly awakened within his breast, made a new man of Jack Clayton, and he felt himself stronger and better than he had ever anticipated he could feel.

He wisely husbanded all his little resources until returning health and strength told him that he might push on, and, as his fuel was now all gone, he made a bundle of the little food left and started off down the coast, little knowing how near his enemy had been to him all this time, and in what a helpless condition.

He had left the igloos early one morning, the weather being good for traveling, and carefully protected from the cold, and feeling more able to endure fatigue and privation than he had done for some time, continued his journey doggedly, resolutely, constantly talking to himself, in order to have some sort of companionship amid this maddening solitude.

It was near six in the evening, or what would be that hour in the natural divisions of day and night, the aurora lighting up the scene with unusual brilliancy, when he suddenly came upon what could be only a hut or rude shelter formed by man.

The roof was formed of an inverted whaleboat, the sides of canvas stretched between two oars, and the front was that very tent which had sheltered him when on the retreat down the coast in company with Tyrrell.

Pushing forward, he quickly entered the miserable dwelling, which yet afforded ample shelter from the blasts of winter; and there, right beneath his gaze, helpless and alone, was the monster to whom he owed all his misery, all his privations—almost the deprivation of life itself!

"Ha! I have found you, have I?" he hissed: "Now, Spencer Tyrrell, what prevents me from taking your wretched life?"

CHAPTER XVIII.

SAM'S BIRTHDAY—JEFF TYLER'S MISFORTUNE—A GLOOMY OUTLOOK.

Living in the greatest contentment, showing nothing but the best of feeling toward one another, each member of the party doing all in his power to promote the general good, the late captain of the *Atlas* and his friends at the fort got on admirably, and decidedly better than Tyrrell had expected.

There was not an abundance, to be sure, and they had to stint themselves somewhat, but at all events they were contented and happy, and this was worth a good deal.

As the winter wore on the cold weather increased, and it took considerable fuel to keep the fort warm, notwithstanding the amount of snow that had fallen upon it.

The coal was nearly exhausted, and Captain Chicks knew that before long they would be obliged to use the wooden sheathing for the fires, and, indeed, portions of it had already been used as kindlings, there being nothing else.

As they had formed no definite plan of action, Captain Chicks having at first thought that it might be wise to send a party to Cape Sable, Littleton Island, or some other of the Polar stations that had been established, in the hope of finding there supplies of provisions left by former exploring parties.

The main trouble was that they had no instruments, these having been stolen by Tyrrell, and could not, therefore, lay their course with sufficient accuracy, to insure the success of the expeditions, a very important consideration, by the way, as in case of non-success there would only be a waste of provisions, energy, and perhaps life, the danger attendant upon such an undertaking, having always to be considered.

Then again, the journey would have to be made on foot, and while the emergency was a pressing one, there was really so little chance of the object of the quest being attained, that it seemed altogether too hazardous to undertake it.

"Better wait till the ice breaks up, sir, and then get away by means of the boat those cowardly villains have left us," suggested Mr. Manne, "for the journey now will be attended with too much danger."

All agreed to this and therefore it was a settled thing that they should get on as well as possible until the breaking up of the ice, and that then they should take their chances, and so no more was said about it.

The next birthday that happened to come along was Sam's, and, as had been the custom, he was asked to name the bill of fare for the grand dinner to be given in the evening.

"Well, if you only had the things for it," he said, cheerfully, "I'd start in with a soup de bully, with chickens' feet on toast, and a shoo-fly amulet for intermets, and a baked shad and trifles on the side. Then I'd have a pig's head a la hungry, and pigeon's wings au naturel, with turnip-tops garnished and battledores elegante in between, not to mention stuffed bulfrogs and a plum-pudding, but——"

"Well, what's the but?" asked the captain.

"But we ain't got the stuff, so suppose we have potato scouse, salt beef, some pickled onions and plum-duff, for we have got them, and they're no trouble to fix up."

This was descending from the sublime to the ridiculous by such a tremendous jump that all hands could not help laughing heartily, and every one was in the best humor possible.

The dinner, it need not be said, was an entire success, Sam keeping the table in a roar by his quaint sayings, and surely the most luxurious repast that caterer ever provided for the tickling of pampered appetites could not have been eaten with a greater relish than were the simple viands which furnished forth the birthday feast of old Sam Salt.

"Are you hungry now, Sam?" asked Captain Chicks, when they pushed back their stools to indulge in a smoke.

"Well, no. I don't think I am," answered the other, "but it's the first time in six months."

The next day, remembering the success they had had on a former occasion, Frank, Sam, Jeff and Theodore set out together to hunt for seals, all being provided with muskets, for it would not do to miss the least chance of capturing whatever they might see.

They had traveled a considerable distance when Frank suddenly espied a seal lying beside an airhole, either asleep, or so unconscious of what was going on that he had not heard the advance of his enemies.

They had come upon him quite suddenly, and Jeff, fearing that he would hear them and disappear before they could fire a shot, rushed forward with his gun clubbed, to strike him over the head.

Just as he was about to strike, he slipped and fell, the blow falling indeed but on the creature's back instead of on his head.

He made one dive for the airhole, overturned Jeff, and disappeared.

In his fall, the unfortunate sailor's weapon was discharged, and the entire contents entered his breast, lacerating him frightfully, one ball entering his left lung, near the heart.

When his comrades ran to him, he could not speak, and appeared to be fast falling.

They attempted to raise him up, but his wounds bled more violently, and the expression on his face indicated that he suffered so much that he would prefer to be let alone.

He extended one hand, and when Frank took it, he pressed the boy's hand and smiled, turning his eyes toward his companions.

Sam and Theodore took his hand, and then, with a struggle he said, faintly:

"Good-by, boys, and tell the captain that I am sorry to leave him, but that——"

He could say no more, and fell back in a dead faint, from which he never recovered, for when they lifted him up life was extinct.

"Poor fellow," said Frank. "We shall all miss him sadly."

They raised the body between them and bore it back to the fort, where it would be given the last rites before being buried beneath the eternal snows of this luckless land.

When near the fort, the captain came hurrying toward them, and asked, excitedly:

"Is that the doctor?"

Being told what had happened, the captain informed them that Dr. Warren was missing, and that his pike had been found upon the snow a long way from the fort, but that there was no sign of him, and there was no telling what had happened.

He did not return all that day, and all hands turned out to find him, for they all liked him, and could not bear to think that a fresh misfortune had befallen them.

After a long search, the body of the unfortunate surgeon was seen lying at the bottom of a deep crevasse, where he had evidently fallen, by some mischance.

That he was dead, was beyond a doubt, but to be sure, Frank was lowered into the pit by a rope, and then it was found that the poor man had been killed by his fall, as there was a deep gash in his head where he had struck the ice, his skull having been fractured.

The body was frozen fast to the ice, and as it was not prac-

ticable to get it out, they left it there marking the spot by a rude cross formed of ice blocks.

They turned their steps sadly toward the fort, the captain remarking gloomily:

"Misfortunes come thick upon us, and no one can tell what new disaster may happen, or how soon."

The words were prophetic, for as they neared the stockade a sudden burst of smoke came from the door of the house, followed by a tongue of flame.

"The house is on fire!" shouted Manne. "What can have caused it? Quick, let us save what we can!"

They dashed across the intervening space, and into the house, which they found all ablaze.

One of the stoves, becoming overheated, in their absence, had burst, and scattering its fiery contents all about, threatened the entire destruction of the dwelling.

CHAPTER XIX.

ACCIDENT AND DISASTER FOLLOW FAST ON EACH OTHER'S HEELS.

When the captain and the rest entered the house it was full of smoke, and the flames were spreading rapidly.

They endeavored to put them out, but as fast as they subdued them in one quarter they broke out in another, and with greater force.

The bunks were on fire, and the flames had crept up into the ceiling, where they could not be reached, although when the snow began to melt it would greatly arrest them.

By that time, however, they would have no roofs to cover their heads, and it was therefore necessary to save it, if possible, and thus prevent such a catastrophe.

The canvas composing the main walls was now in a blaze, however, and it became necessary to save the contents before they were destroyed.

The lighter articles were at once hurried outside, the extra clothing, blankets, and weapons being first saved, and then such provisions as were not in the storehouse below.

By this time, however, the mud and snow walls had begun to melt and fall, letting down the rocks which were at the bottom, and greatly endangering the whole structure.

The wooden sheathing being so cold, did not, fortunately, catch fire, but it warped and cracked and gave way in many places, which was about as bad, for it threatened the destruction of the house as much as if it had caught fire.

The castaways had saved nearly everything, except the boat, which was rather heavy to manage, and were returning for it, when a warning cry from Frank told them that some new danger threatened.

In fact, the captain was already over the threshold, when our hero pulled him back, and both fled from the spot.

The walls of the shelter, weakened in many places, suddenly gave way with a crash, letting the roof, with all its weight of snow and ice, right down into the centre of what had been their common room.

A sudden cry from Manne aroused a new sense of fear, and as he came hurrying up, he gasped:

"Where is Mert? I saw him going into the house. Has any one seen him?"

No, the faithful fellow was not seen, and beyond a doubt he had perished.

The hut was now a mass of steaming, smoking ruins, the flames every now and then bursting forth in spite of the snow and ice, and driving our friends away by their intensity.

The storehouse had been hollowed out of a snowbank, not far from the main dwelling, and this had now been broken in by the falling timbers, so that access to it was impossible, a mass of heavy joists lying right across the entrance.

In this was stored the coal—what there was—and this now began to take fire from the intense heat generated by the burning timbers.

Arming themselves with axes, the captain, Frank, and Mr. Manne now attacked the outer edge of the burning rubbish-heap in order to save what they could for fuel, and also in hopes of reaching the boat.

As fast as a bit of timber was cut away, somebody seized and carried it off beyond the reach of the flames, where loose snow was thrown upon the burning portions, and the fire put out.

Considerable was saved in this manner, but before long the steam caused by the melting of the snow drove the workers away, many of them having received severe scalds.

The flames now raged the fiercest in the storehouse, and all hope of saving its contents was abandoned.

The boat, too, could not be reached, and beyond a doubt it had already been destroyed, and with it the strongest hope of the unfortunate castaways.

A sudden shifting of the flames enabled Captain Chicks to bring up his ax-men again, and considerable timber was saved, which was only partly charred, and which would serve for constructing another shelter, the pieces being of good size.

While this was going on, Frank caught a glimpse of the boat, and his heart sank within him.

It was in the very centre of the burning pile, and was now more than half consumed, its outlines being just distinguishable.

This was a sad blow, indeed, and Frank could hardly restrain his tears when he realized how much it meant to them in their helpless condition.

With the boat they might have accomplished much—perhaps been able to reach some civilized port; without it they could do nothing.

Choking down his emotions, Frank resumed his work, for there was no time to lose in idle regrets, and every moment was precious.

The flames suddenly shifted again, and drove the workers away, and now there was no place where they could do anything, and they were obliged to stand and watch the work of destruction without being able to prevent it.

The storehouse was now a mass of fire, and to remain near it was exceedingly dangerous, owing to the frequent explosions caused by the steam escaping.

Great blocks of ice were thrown to an enormous height, and showers of scalding water fell on all sides, so that it was extremely hazardous to remain near the fire, which was now entirely beyond control.

Nothing could extinguish the burning coal, and there it lay, a glowing mass surrounded by ice, sinking down to the ground beneath, and still burning on, and every now and then causing a volcanic eruption of stone and earth, ice, hot water, and general rubbish, the volumes shooting up into the air to a considerable distance, and then falling in showers all around.

What they had saved the captain and his friends took away to a safe distance, and then stood upon a slight eminence overlooking the scene and watched the thrilling sight.

"The fire will burn itself out," mused the captain, "and then the ice will resume its sway. It conquers everything, and it will conquer us in time if we remain in this pitiless country."

"It looks like burned brandy on ice," remarked Sam, looking at the glowing coals surrounded by ice, "or like a dish of ice-cream set on fire. Gosh, what an elegant punch that would make!"

"Hallo!" said Joe, suddenly, "bless my heart if there isn't Grim. Well, that cat takes the cake. The fire must be mighty hot that he won't sit alongside."

Much to the surprise of all, the black cat, which until that moment nobody had given a thought to, suddenly dashed out from amid the burning rubbish, rolled on the sward, and then ran to Joe and sat on his shoulder, purring vigorously.

"Well, Mr. Grimalkin, you found it warm in there, did you? And so you came out to see Joe, did you? That's right, Puss," and Joe stroked his pet, while the latter purred and rubbed his sleek head against the boy's cheek.

"'Pears to me that cat is the Old Nick himself," muttered Sam, "for anything else would a' been roasted or melted, but he don't seem to be even scorched."

"He's a boss cat," returned Joe, with a laugh; "and when I get home I'm going to exhibit him around the country as the Arctic hero, Tommy Grimalkin. Here you are, gents, photographs of this wonderful animal, only a dime! A lock of his hair for a quarter! Step right up, gents—lecture begins immediately!"

These words, given in the style affected by the "side show blower" in a circus, set everybody to laughing, Joe being a good mimic and possessing a vein of comical humor, which he occasionally drew upon, much to the amusement of his comrades.

At last the fire disappeared beneath the surface, although it continued to burn beyond a doubt for some hours afterward.

With what material they had at hand, our friends now constructed a shelter, for it could not be called a house, and after eating a light supper, turned in for the night, Joe taking Grim with him into his sleeping-bag, so that both would be warmer.

They were still sheltered from the biting blast, and although they no longer possessed the cozy home they had had in the fort, they had much to be thankful for.

Disasters were coming upon them thick and fast, however, and it was well that the future was hidden from them, otherwise their sleep that night would have been sadly troubled.

CHAPTER XX.

OUR FRIENDS LOSE A FIRM FRIEND—AN UNFORESEEN CALAMITY.

There was opportunity the next day to improve their shelter in a measure and make it more comfortable, and this our friends attended to without delay.

For a week or ten days they lived in comparative comfort, considering the desperate state of their circumstances; but then Mr. Manne, formerly ice-pilot, began to notice signs in the pack which he did not altogether like.

It was not so much that it seemed ready to break up, and that the long-imprisoned waters were about to re-assume their sway, for the time for the return of the sun was approaching, but the position of their house seemed also changed.

In fact, without knowing it, they had built upon the floe instead of upon the land, and in a week's time they had drifted to a considerable distance, so much so, indeed, that they could not help notice it.

There was great danger, therefore, of the floe separating, and of their being precipitated in the icy flood, without the slightest notice, at any time.

"In fact, it was but a short time after Mr. Manne had called attention to the fact that strange sounds began to come from the pack, groanings, gratings, and occasionally a noise like the snapping of innumerable whips, or the discharge of a number of pistols, accompanied, now and then, by strange vibrations, as though the foundations of all things were giving way.

"I would advise a speedy removal to the mainland," said Manne, "for we cannot tell how soon we may find ourselves floating down-stream on a cake of ice, or perhaps even worse than that. I do not see how I could have made such a mistake as to take a part of the floe for the land."

"Nobody blames you, Manne," returned the captain. "It is a wonder to me how you can tell one from the other, when both are so much alike."

"The ice shifts, and the land does not."

"But certainly this part has been stationary all the winter until now. In fact, it was so before the ice closed in, and if I mistake not there were rocks and a sandbar right where our house stands."

"So I thought," returned Manne, musingly; "but so many strange, exciting things have happened to us, that I was not sure whether I really remembered it, or whether I had only fancied it."

Nothing was said for a few minutes, and then the officer resumed:

"That crevasse, too, where the doctor lost his life, was a strange affair. That wasn't out on the floe in the thick ice, but on the main, where such things are not found, or at least there are no other signs, no glaciers, or anything of that sort. It is really very strange."

The trembling having increased at the end of an hour after the first indications, all hands began to move the supply of provisions and other necessities to a point where it was not felt.

Each took as large a bundle as he could conveniently carry upon his back, and the procession then moved further inland, returning after their burdens had been deposited in what was considered a safe spot.

Having removed everything from the house, they then prepared to take the latter itself down, so as to put it up somewhere else.

It was taken to pieces as fast as possible, and bundles made of the materials, which the castaways shouldered, and started off in single file, the captain first and Mr. Manne last.

Suddenly a tremendous crashing sound was heard, and the water suddenly spouted up between Frank and Mr. Manne, the latter being a few yards behind.

Then like an avalanche the ice suddenly slid away toward the pack, and a column of water, ice, sand and rocks was thrown into the air.

Frank staggered rather than ran forward, and at the next moment there was a channel a hundred feet in width between him and the unfortunate ice-pilot.

The latter was upon a large cake of ice, and near him were the remains of the house.

The edge of the cake exposed to view showed a wide strip of sand, and here and there a bare rock was in sight.

A portion of the land had, in fact, suddenly been cut away from the main, or so it appeared.

The real explanation of the matter, as was afterward definitely settled, when there was more time to think of it, was this:

On the shore there had been originally, probably a hundred

years before, a large sandbank, and upon this the floe had grounded, becoming almost a part of the land itself.

Upon this had been carried alluvial deposits brought by the warmer currents from the south until upon the floe was formed land, the ice being covered up, and a continuous chain formed connecting it with the main.

Rocks brought hither by the pack ice had settled down, the sand had separated itself from the snow, and here, finally, was a firm tongue of solid land, as it seemed, projecting into the sea.

Finally, in the course of years, the original sandbank had suddenly settled, the ocean had re-assumed its sway, the land founded on the ice had been swept away, and the deception at last exposed.

There had been nothing but an ice-floe covered with sand and rocks, although it had been mistaken for the land itself, and now the connecting link had broken away, and the floe had been swept into its natural element.

Such things, though seemingly strange and unnatural, have happened time and again on the ragged shores of the Arctic, and will continue to do so till the end of time.

Thus, the crevasse into which the good doctor had fallen was merely the pit formed by the first breaking away of this ephemeral peninsula from the actual mainland, and it was that thought which had puzzled Manne and given rise to such vague alarm in his mind.

The others were safe, but Manne was carried away before their sight; the ice gradually went to pieces, as it met the opposing masses, and was broken and piled up confusedly.

Every now and then the stream would become choked with ice and would not be visible, but would then suddenly re-assert itself, send columns of spray in all directions, and roaring and rushing and tumbling, would send the irregular masses of ice rolling and crashing on one another on its way through the pack.

It was a grand sight, but a sad one as well, for in one of these struggles their house was suddenly seen to disappear beneath the flood, and at the next moment the ice parted under Manne's feet and he was precipitated into the boiling flood.

They saw him struggling for an instant, but then they lost sight of him, and the seething waters rushed on, tossing high their spray and foam, grinding and pounding great blocks of ice to powder, and putting down all opposition, one poor human life being as nothing to their mighty power.

Safe on the bank, they gazed sadly at the awful sight, and then, as the wind gradually shifted and the motion in the pack became less violent and finally appeared to cease altogether, the waters having again subsided, they betook themselves to where they had left the supplies, and began to consult with each other about building a shelter.

"The place is accursed!" cried the captain. "Let us rather try our fortunes with the icy blast, and like those villains who deserted us, attempt to reach civilization."

CHAPTER XXI.

THE QUESTION ANSWERED—TYRRELL'S BITTER FOE.

At sight of the man who had suddenly broken in upon his solitude, sitting there alone in the hut, his comrades gone he knew not whither, Tyrrell turned faint and sick.

The sight of the man was a reproach, a warning to him, and he saw in his face a dreadful foreboding of a fate well merited but dreaded with all the intensity of groveling fear.

The man's face caused him fear, but what emotions must not his words have aroused?

"What prevents me from taking your wretched life?"

This was the man's question, and what answer but one could he make to it—what else could he reply but this:

"Nothing. I am in your power. Be merciful."

He did not say this, but like the groveling cur he was, turned pale, crouched down upon the furs, covered his head with his hands as if expecting a blow, and cried aloud in terror:

"Don't kill me, Jack! don't! I am helpless—my leg is broken, and I can't move. Don't kill me, Jack, for God's sake! It wasn't I that abandoned you. The others forced me to it. Have mercy, Jack, for the love of Heaven!"

Jack Clayton gazed at the cowering wretch before him for a few moments in the greatest disgust, and then, in tones evincing the most ineffable contempt, said, with withering scorn:

"Bah! d'ye think I'd stain my hands with the blood of such as you? I don't dabble in such filth. If ye had the soul of a man in your great hulking carcass, Spence Tyrrell, I'd fight you and give you odds, but you haven't the spunk of a mouse—

ye're all blow and bluster. Ye could lose yer soul through a crack in the floor, it's so small. Bah! I wouldn't touch such carrion as you, for fear of contagion."

Master of invective as Tyrrell was, in his abject fear and cowardice he could not invent words in reply to the withering torrent of well-deserved abuse which Jack Clayton now poured upon him.

"Kill you!" hissed the other. "I don't kill skunks, for fear of being made foul by the contact. If I was to touch you, I'd be smirched like I had touched pitch, and I could never get the smell of your dirty blood off my hands. It's bad enough to have to breathe the same air with ye, to say nothing of coming near enough to strike.

"So you cry for mercy, do you, with the cries of your murdered mates yet ringing in your ears, with their blood still fresh on your hands? Much mercy you showed our good captain when you deserted him.

"Helpless, eh? So was we helpless when you drugged us and left us to perish in the snow; but little you cared for that. Oh, you miserable snake, toad, worm, whatever else is mean and vile! I could crush ye under my foot if it wouldn't disgrace me too much."

So the man continued, until he had exhausted all his wrath, expressed all his scorn of the contemptible creature before him, who, had he not been the small-souled, driveling brute that he was, would have arisen long since, broken leg and all, and choked his accuser into silence.

He had not the spirit to do this. He knew that every word Jack uttered was the truth; he knew that he had no boy to contend with, and that Jack, spite of his wan look, was more than a match for him, and coward that he was, he could not be even goaded to resistance, not even by the scathing abuse which rained upon him.

"Bah! you're not worth wasting words on," said Jack, at length, clearing his throat with an action characteristic of disgust. "If ye'd been a man ye wouldn't have stood the half of what I've said to you without knocking me stiff, game leg or no game leg, but you ain't worth the hangman's rope or the powder that'd send your mean soul to where it's long been waited for, so I'm blessed if I say another word to such rubbish!"

Presently turning around, however, he said contemptuously:

"I asked ye what prevented my taking your life, didn't I? Well, I'll tell you what. I'd rather ye'd live and suffer—live and feel the bitter scorn of all decent men eating into your black heart day by day.

"What prevents me is the knowing that if I killed you now I'd let you off from further punishment, and you haven't had the half that you deserve for all you've done, and another thing that prevents me is that I hate to lower myself to your level by dipping my hands in your filthy blood.

"Recollect, though, Spence Tyrrell, that you haven't got a more bitter foe in the whole world than me, and if I choose to take my own means for punishing you for your treachery, that's my affair, and now I've said all I'm going to say, and be hanged to you."

Then he turned his back upon the wretch, and paid no more attention to him than if he had not been there.

After warming himself, he took out his bundle of provisions—it was small enough, goodness knows—and began to eat, Tyrrell looking on in wonder at the sight.

After a long time the steward and Woods came in, being greatly surprised at seeing the man whom they had long believed dead.

Even now the steward would hardly credit the evidence of his senses, and was not sure but that he saw a ghost, and that its appearance meant harm to him and his comrades.

"Guess you didn't expect to see me again, did you?" observed Jack, quietly. "Oh, you needn't look scared—I'm alive fast enough, no thanks to some I might mention, and what's more, I've come to stay."

"Don't let him!" shrieked Tyrrell; "he intends to kill us all. He said so to me. Drive him out!"

"Shut up, you booby," blurted out Woods, roughly. "I'd a good sight rather have Jack Clayton with us than you, any day. Besides, we're two to one, anyhow."

"Ye needn't mind me," said Jack to the smith. "I ain't come here to fight, unless you fight fust. I know well enough why you stick by Tyrrell—it's because he knows how to find his way out of this wilderness and you don't. Otherwise, you'd shake him like ye would the plague."

"You're just right there, Jack," said the steward, "and I'm glad you're no ghost, for it's a bad sign to see one. You and we two isn't going to have no quarrel, and as for that muf"—pointing his finger contemptuously at Tyrrell—"if he opens his head to you to give you any sauce, just whack him alongside the jaw. The beggar's leg ought to have been well long ago,

but he's too durned glad to get out of workin', and so he jest keeps it from healing quick."

Tyrrell, seeing that they were all against him, and that his two comrades had made friends with Jack instead of ejecting him from the hut, ground his teeth in impotent rage, and set himself to thinking how he might revenge himself upon the man for his contempt.

There was little to do except to keep the fire going and look after the comfort of the hut, for there was no game nor fuel to be had, and consequently time dragged heavily on the hands of the quartette, and little quarrels and bickerings were of frequent occurrence.

Jack, however, seemed to read a good deal out of a little black book he took from his pocket, though when asked what it was he would put it away and not produce it again for some time.

Tyrrell fretted more than any one, for he could not go out like the others, and was often left alone for hours at a time, unable to help himself, and tormented by the feeling that at last the others had deserted him, and that he must die, alone and friendless, in the inhospitable North.

So the time passed on, Woods and John continually disputing, Jack reading from his little black book whenever he could get a chance without being observed, and the sick man's leg seemed greatly improved, so much so, in fact, that the smith finally declared he was not going to wait any longer for it.

"You can walk with a stick, and I'll make you a crutch," said Woods, "and you've got to do the best you can. The ice is ready to break up, and the sun is already here, and afore we know it the snow will be melting, and then we'll have the fiend's own job to make our way out of this beastly hole. If we had a boat it wouldn't be so bad."

"Besides that, the grub isn't going to last forever," growled the steward, "and we don't know as we shall find any game."

Tyrrell protested that he was not yet able to bear the fatigue of a journey over the snow; but the others insisted upon his attempting it, and Woods fashioned him a rude crutch to assist him in walking.

The camp was therefore broken up, and the four men set off to find that home which some of them were destined never to reach.

They traveled all day without stopping, but at night Tyrrell was so used up that he swore he would go no further until his leg was stronger.

"You'll do as I say!" growled Woods, with his fist clenched, while Jack Clayton retired to a corner of the wretched hut they had made and pored over the pages of the mysterious little book.

In the morning Tyrrell refused to budge until the next day, whereat the steward struck his crutch from under him and caused him to fall violently to the ground.

Then the brutal wretch kicked the prostrate villian in the side, and swore roundly that he would stand no nonsense, and that if Tyrrell was not ready to guide them they would leave him there and get on as best they could without his help.

This brought him to terms, and he remained with them for three or four days, although suffering the most intense pain from his broken leg.

At last, however, a fever attacked him, his limbs refused to support him, and it was entirely out of the question for him to attempt to lead them.

"We've gone far enough for me to know the rest of the way anyhow," said Woods, "and I say let's leave him and go on alone."

"You may do so, if you like," said Jack Clayton, to their intense surprise, "but I'm going to stay behind and take care of him."

"What!"

"That's what I'm going to do—stay behind and look out for him."

Such a declaration from a man like Jack Clayton seemed so utterly nonsensical that both Woods and the steward broke into a coarse laugh, but, spite of all their ridicule, Jack was unmoved, and merely said:

"That's my determination, boys, so make the best of it!"

CHAPTER XXII.

AN UNACCOUNTABLE CHANGE AND ITS CAUSE—THE LITTLE BLACK BOOK.

That Jack Clayton should be in earnest in his avowal to remain with Tyrrell seemed inexplicable to the two scoundrels, who urged him to give up the idea and go with them.

They were sure that he had some design to carry out, and that having gotten rid of them for a short time, he would rejoin them.

"I know what you want," said Woods, at length, "and that's to be alone with Tyrrell so's you can kill him. If that's all that's keeping you, go ahead and do it. I'm sure we won't stop ye."

"Course we won't," growled John; "we'll help you, Jack, and then we can all three go on together. Come ahead. I'll toss up with you to see who strikes the fust blow. We're in need of provisions, anyhow, and——"

What a horrible suggestiveness there was in the man's look as he drew his sheath-knife and whetted it upon his boot!

What frightful ideas came sweeping through the mind, called up by the action, by the broken sentence, and by the man's savage glance.

All the dreadful stories he had ever heard or read of man preying upon his fellow-man rushed tumultuously over Jack Clayton's brain.

His face turned the hue of ashes, while the cold sweat stood upon his reeking forehead.

Grasping his own knife, he threw himself in front of the wretched hovel where Tyrrell lay delirious, and, intercepting the steward, cried fiercely:

"As God sees me, I'll strike ye dead if you attempt to pass. I'll have no such demon's work as you propose. That man is under my protection."

"Well, then, go in and kill him yourself," retorted John, deprecatingly, "only be quick about it."

"The man's life shall not be taken by any but the One that gave it."

"Oh, come along," growled Woods. "Leave him to die. That'll be the easiest way out of it."

"No!" said Jack, firmly. "Understand me, boys—I'm not going until Tyrrell can go with me. Do you think I want his life?"

"You might have taken it once, only you wanted him to suffer all the more."

"Well, that time has gone by. I don't say Spence Tyrrell ain't a bad man, for he is, and so are all of us, but I do say that I've got no right to take vengeance on him. I'd be worse than him if I left him now, and I'm going to stay."

"H'm! turned pious!" sneered Woods.

"No, I haven't, but I'm not the man I was, and don't look at things like I did once. I prayed once that Tyrrell might come to suffer just what those suffered that he abandoned. He's done worse, and now I'm sorry I said it, and I'm going to take care of him till he gets better."

Jack had certainly changed, if he could say and mean these things, and he looked as if he did, beyond a doubt.

The others were angry, and, as they were ready to go, turned away and left him.

"You're a fool, that's all I can say," growled Woods.

"Good-by, parson," sneered John. "You'll get sick of your job afore long."

Jack stood and watched them out of sight, and then turned into the miserable shelter they had built, where Tyrrell lay tossing and moaning in his agony.

"God give me strength to bear this trial," murmured Jack, as he entered. "I am a changed man I know, and don't think as I used to, but maybe I'm not as strong as I think, and might be tempted."

Tyrrell was too delirious to recognize the man, although he knew that some one had entered, and as he tossed restlessly upon his rough bed, he moaned:

"Don't leave me alone, Woods, or Jack may come in and kill me. He hates me and glares at me so that I know he means mischief. If I could move from here, I'd shoot him some night and have an end to this."

It needed all the man's good resolutions to prevent him from springing at the villain's throat and throttling him, but he controlled himself by a masterly effort and remained standing where he was, saying never a word.

Presently Tyrrell, in his fever, half raised himself upon one arm and said in a whisper, as if talking to some one:

"I say, John, if you'll put him out of the way, I'll give you five hundred dollars when we get home. I don't like Jack Clayton, and it was an evil day for me when he came back. I wish I had been around that day—I'd have shot him. Get rid of him for me, won't you? I'd do it myself if I was stronger."

Again the listener was greatly tempted to rush forward and put an end to the man and his mutterings at one moment, but again remembering his determination, he remained rooted to the spot.

"There's that young Anderson," continued Tyrrell, after a pause. "He's done for beyond a doubt, but I'd like to have settled him myself. I hate him, and I hate his race, and I'm

glad he's dead. I wish Jack Clayton was, too. He defied me, heaped scorn upon me, bearded me to my teeth. Ugh! if I could catch him asleep once I'd knife him as sure as I live."

"Steady, Jack, steady," muttered the seaman to himself, as he checked down his rising anger. "You've taken upon yourself to be forgiving, to be merciful, to act the part of a Christian gentleman, and not of a miserable, murdering ruffian. God knows it's hard, after what you've been, but try, Jack, my boy—try with all your might!"

"You know it's hard to leave a man to die in this wilderness, even when he's done his worse again' you, and when he's as bad as this man seems to be but it's your duty, Jack, remember that; it's your duty, and the more hard it is to do the greater the praise when you have done it. The book tells you that, plain enough, Jack."

Tyrrell was quieter now, evidently thinking, if he thought at all, that he was alone, and he soon fell into a gentle doze, while Jack went away to a corner, sat down, and took out the little black book his companions had noticed him reading on several occasions.

Turning over the pages, he finally found what he was looking for, and said aloud, rather than read it, for he seemed perfectly familiar with the words:

"For, inasmuch as you have done it unto the least of these, My children, ye have done it unto Me."

This, then, was the source of Jack's altered feelings, to which he now turned for consolation and for confirmation in his new course of action.

The book was the New Testament, a common cheap pocket edition, such as are sold by the thousand, at a few cents each, and had been the parting gift of a friend.

Jack Clayton had carried that little Testament in his coat-pocket for more than a year, simply from force of habit, and because it had been the gift of a friend, but it had only been of late that he had troubled himself to look through its pages.

In his solitude while making that fearful march through the desert, he had begun to look over it to relieve the monotony, and many passages had become familiar to him, though much in the same way as a child knows and repeats verses, yet without comprehending their meaning.

After coming to the camp of Tyrrell and the others, he had continued his reading, but it was not until within a few days of the time now described that he seemed to really catch the sense of what he read, and to get its true meaning.

If he had been slow to comprehend, tardy in accepting the truth, he was certainly not lacking in faith in giving it his whole attention, his full belief when he at last did come over, and though perhaps not a converted man in the common use of the term, he was a decidedly changed one.

Nor could his sincerity be questioned, for it had been put to a severe test and had not given way, and the man had already laid out a plan of action, which, if carried out, would entitle him to far more credit for real Christianity than people usually get in this world.

"Captain Chicks was a good man," he mused, as he sat with the book on his knee; "and so was Frank good, and Ted and Mr. Wheeling. Even Sam Salt, cranky as he was, would no sooner do anything mean than he'd cut off his toes! They was all good, when you come to think of it, and yet I was fool enough to go leave them and follow this——"

He suddenly broke off, as he was about to apply some contemptuous epithet to the unconscious engineer, and muttered to himself:

"Hold on, Jack! You've no right to judge him when you ain't such a good fellow your own self. How would you like to be judged just as you are judging him?"

Then he arose, moved Tyrrell into a more comfortable position, washed the fever-damp from his forehead, gave him something to drink when he awoke for an instant, still unconscious of who his attendant was, and otherwise supplied his wants, doing all this with the utmost tenderness, and without the least fuss or worry, and bearing all Tyrrell's fuming and complaining with the greatest patience.

Jack Clayton was a changed man, indeed, to do all this.

CHAPTER XXIII.

AGAIN ON THE MARCH—FACE TO FACE.

For three or four days Spencer Tyrrell, engineer of the *Atlas*, lay between life and death.

Had he been left alone there would have been no doubt as to which would have gained the mastery.

Jack Clayton attended him with all the patience he could master, and gradually his temptations grew weaker and weaker

until he had finally subdued them and put them under his feet.

He could not have made a better nurse if he had been trained for it, and his efforts were rewarded by the recovery of his patient from the fever which had so harassed him.

One morning, after the first easy sleep he had had, Tyrrell awoke, and glancing about him, saw Jack sitting by the scanty fire, getting breakfast.

He shuddered and tried to get up, and this made a noise which attracted Jack's attention.

"Better not try to do that, sir," he said quietly, "till I can come and help you. I don't think you're strong enough for that yet."

"What are you doing?" growled Tyrrell; but his tone made no difference to Jack now, as he had conquered himself

"Getting your breakfast."

"My breakfast?"

"And my own, too, sir, at the same time."

"Where's Woods?"

"Couldn't say, sir."

"Haven't you seen him this morning?"

"No."

"Then, where's John?"

"With Woods, I suppose; they was together when I last saw them."

"When was that?" was the petulant inquiry.

"I can't remember; it was some little time ago."

"They have abandoned me," cried the wretch, partly rising; "they have left me with you, knowing your hatred of me. Don't kill me, Jack—don't, don't! Help, there! help against my murderer!"

Then the abject creature, exhausted by his efforts, fell back upon his bed, and lay there, writhing and foaming at the mouth.

"I wouldn't do that, if I was you, sir," said Jack. "You'll only do yourself a mischief. You've had a fever, and are weak yet, and if you bring it on again, I can't tell what harm it might do you. Rest yourself a bit, and then have something to eat."

"You are alone here?" asked the other, surprised, evidently, at Jack's tone.

"Yes."

"They have really gone away—left us two here alone?"

"Yes."

"How long since?"

"Three or four days. You would find it out sooner or later, and I may as well tell you, though I was going to wait till you was stronger."

"Three or four days?" echoed Tyrrell. "As long as that? I don't believe it."

"That's the time, sure enough."

"And we have been here alone all that time?"

"Yes."

"Ha! that's likely. Do you think I would have stayed with you all that time? Do you think I'm mad?"

"You've had a fever, and I didn't know once but you'd have died, but if you'll keep quiet and don't fret, you'll be all right again, and we can travel on again and get out of this awful country."

"What are you up to, Jack Clayton?" demanded Tyrrell, angrily. "You have been looking after me so that I wouldn't die on your hands, so that you might kill me in full possession of my faculties, not when I was unconscious, for then you wouldn't enjoy your revenge so well."

"I wouldn't talk like that; it isn't true, and it only frets you."

"Give me my crutch."

"Won't you have some breakfast?"

"Put out some on a tin plate and let me see you taste it. I

I don't know whether you want to poison me or not, and I want to make sure that what I eat is all right."

Jack did as requested without a murmur of complaint, and Tyrrell, eyeing him suspiciously all the time, at last snatched the plate from him and eagerly devoured its contents.

Then getting upon his feet, by the aid of his crutch and a stick, not permitting Jack to assist him, he drew his hood over his head, put on his gloves, and went outside, not without some difficulty, for he was still weak.

Jack ate his own breakfast and then went outside, where he saw Tyrrell coming toward the hut, after having tramped over the ice, and evidently suffering from cold and exhaustion.

As he neared the shelter, he would have fallen if Jack had not caught him, he was so faint, but even for this kindness he was not the least grateful, swearing and cursing, and telling the man not to come near or touch him, for that he was afraid of him and knew that his intentions were evil.

"There've gone, fast enough!" he muttered, as he staggered to his couch, "the thankless dogs. May they lose their way, and be frozen to death! Curses upon them, the brutes!"

"Don't do that, sir," interposed Jack. "Curses, they say, always comes back on them that utters 'em. Let 'em go, sir, and be thankful it's no wuss."

To this Tyrrell made no reply, but presently, when Jack proposed to shift him to an easier position and bandage his leg, he offered no objection, but watched the operation moodily and in silence, his mind being evidently occupied in turning over the incidents of the last few days.

He did not seem to fret much after this, and, as a consequence, his fever departed, and he had a much healthier look than before.

The sun was now quite strong, and during the middle of the day there was considerable thawing, so that Jack deemed it wise to push on at once.

The next day, therefore, when he proposed this, Tyrrell gruffly consented, and even permitted his comrade to assist him to his feet, and even took his arm in walking.

The hut was left as it was, a bundle being made of all that was valuable, Jack strapping this upon his shoulder.

Then they set off together, Tyrrell using his crutch and Jack's shoulder, and thus they made pretty good progress.

They had hardly traveled an hour's time, however, when they suddenly, upon rounding a bend in the coast-line, came upon a group of persons sitting around a miserable little fire, cooking a few scanty provisions.

Tyrrell started back, uttered a cry of horror, and fell fainting in Jack Clayton's arms.

No wonder, for in the leader of this little group who now started up he recognized Captain Chicks.

"My God, captain, are you still alive?" cried Jack. "I thought your whole party had perished."

"No thanks to you and this villain here," answered the captain. "You two, then, are the only survivors? You would have done better not to have deserted us."

"Don't tax me with that, sir," said Jack, pained and saddened. "I know it myself too well. Lord only knows what I've suffered since."

"And you and Tyrrell alone are left of all your band?"

"There was more, but they left us, and I stayed behind to take care of him. His leg is broken, and he was feverish and couldn't go on, and it was no more than right that I should stay by him."

"Well, if you can devote yourself to that brute," muttered Sam, who was of the party, "it's a credit to ye, I suppose, but I'll be durned if I wouldn't go hungry for six months rather than do it."

"I ain't such a good man myself that I can judge him harshly," murmured Jack, quietly, "and perhaps he hasn't done altogether right; in fact, I know he hasn't, but he's sick

and wounded now, and it seems unnat'ral to leave him so. You wouldn't advise me to do it, would you, sir?" turning an appealing glance to the captain.

"No, Jack, I would not indeed. You seem to have suffered much yourself. I see it in your face. It had been better for us all, though, if we had never met this man."

"Is this all of you?" asked Jack, still supporting Tyrrell, and glancing around; "only you and Sam, Frank and Ted? Why, you've got that black cat, too. Where is Joe—little Joe, the cabin boy? That was his pet."

"We left him behind there under the snow," said Sam, passing his coat-sleeve across his eyes. "He was a good little fellow, Joe was, and I'm sorry he couldn't stand it."

"And the officers—Mr. Wheeling, Mr. Manne, the doctor and the rest?"

"Lost," answered Frank, "one after another, and now we're on the retreat, and God knows how soon we, too, must go. We have barely enough food to last another day."

Tyrrell now opened his eyes, glared wildly at Frank and the captain, and then clutching Jack's arm, pulled him forward, muttering hoarsely:

"Come, Jack, come. I am haunted. Let me shut out this horrible dream if I can. I am afraid of ghosts. If they can kill, they will!"

Then Jack led him on ahead so that he should not see the others, and they following on behind, took up the dreary procession.

CHAPTER XXIV.

ONE MORE VICTIM TO THE PITILESS NORTH.

After the death of Mr. Manne, Captain Chicks put into execution his resolution not to remain longer on the spot, and the next morning preparations were made for departure.

The provisions were made up into bundles, the hut was torn down and the material split up and made into bundles to be used as fuel, and then each one took his share of the load, and the march was begun.

No one took more clothes than was absolutely necessary, for it was not deemed wise to burden themselves too much, and the same rule was carried out with regard to weapons.

The captain and Sam each had a rifle; Frank took an axe, and Joe and Ted carried pikes, everything else being left behind.

Their sleeping-bags being necessary, were, of course, taken along, for without them they would have suffered more than they did.

Joe begged to take Grim along, and so the creature was allowed to accompany them, sometimes running on ahead and sometimes being carried under Joe's arm or nestled upon his shoulder under his fur hood.

"It's wonderful what that cat can stand," observed Sam, one day. "Why, he don't seem to eat nothing, and he's as fond of Joe as a human being could be. Wonder if he wouldn't make a good rabbit stew?"

"You shan't eat him!" cried Joe, as though Sam had meant what he said. "He's my cat, and I'm going to take him home."

Grim curled up more snugly on Joe's shoulder and looked out at Sam with his green eyes, as though he had understood what was said, for he hissed and spat when the man approached him so that they all laughed, and Frank said:

"I'm afraid your rabbit stew would lie heavy on your stomach, Sam, so you'd better give up the idea."

"Well, I would like to have a partridge pie with onions, any-

way, or I wouldn't object to a marmalade of mackerel au fins, herbs, or a trot-'em-out of chickens' livers and gimblets."

"Or some ten-penny nails larded with tin-tacks," suggested Theodore; "that would be almost as digestible."

Day after day the weary journey was kept up, and little by little the spirits of our friends began to flag and their strength to fail.

The way was long, and they could see but one end to it, and that lay in the grave.

Joe, unused to such fatiguing work, began to give out, but, nevertheless, he toiled on, uncomplainingly, and did his best to be cheerful, and to keep up with the rest.

Cold and weary, foot-sore and hungry, worn out in body and mind, there at last came a time when he fell exhausted in the road, and when they raised him he could not stand alone.

That night was bitterly cold, and though they covered him up as much as they could, they could not warm him or bring the glow to his wan cheeks.

In the morning his sleeping-bag was frozen, and had to be cut apart before he could be released, and even when he was brought close to the fire, he did not seem to grow warmer.

They made him up a hot breakfast, but he did not relish it, and complained of feeling sick at his stomach, and cold.

His feet and limbs were badly frost-bitten, and the skin came off his hands, leaving them raw and sore, while his feet were so tender that he said it felt as if he were walking on hot coals.

A fever seemed racking his brain, too, and he was frequently delirious, and talked all sorts of nonsense.

The captain and Frank carried him in their arms half of that day, but at last he begged them to stop and put him down.

"But you can't walk, Joe, and you're not heavy."

"Even my weight tires you, Frank, burdened as you are already, and you're not as strong as you were."

"Ted and I can carry you, then," suggested Sam, "and give the others a spell."

"No, no, it's no use; you'd better put me down. I can't——"

A sudden change came over his face, and as he looked at it, Frank shuddered.

The shadow of death rested upon that face, and all who saw it knew that the boy's last hour had come.

At a sign from the captain, Frank released his hold, and the kind-hearted commander laid the boy tenderly upon the snow, over which Sam had hastily thrown his outer coat.

Joe smiled faintly, took their hands one by one, and then said:

"Good-by, Captain Chicks. You've been very kind to me, who was only a poor cabin boy, and I shall not forget it when I go up yonder. Good-by, Sam. You won't hurt Grim, will you? He's good, if he is only a black cat. Good-by, Frank and Ted. You've been kind to me, too. Will you put me under the snow when I am gone, and let me stay there?"

"Yes, yes, my boy," cried the captain, understanding Joe's dread. "Nothing shall harm you when you are gone."

"Then good-by, all, and God bless you. I would have liked to get home and see my people again, but I must be content to wait for them."

He said but little after this, seeming to fade away gradually, as a candle burns out, the smile still resting on his face, although his eyes were closed.

The end came upon him so gently that they hardly knew when he died, but sat by his side watching him long after his kind heart had ceased to beat, and his sweet, boyish spirit had passed on out of the region of eternal snow into the bright summer-land above, where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest.

They dug him a grave in the pure white snow, and laid him away to rest, his hands folded over his bosom, and his coat

wrapped about him, and the hood just revealing a fringe of curly brown locks, the smile still on his handsome face, the poor worn body at last at rest, and redeemed from all suffering.

Above the spot arose a soft mound of snow, with a block of ice at the head and foot, and upon it the boy's staff, which he had laid down forever in this world, and gone on to a land where his feet would never be weary, and where he would need no staff but that of the Good Shepherd.

"Rest in your lonely grave amid the glistening snows of the frozen North, Joe, my boy, until the dawning of the bright day when we shall meet beyond the sea of trouble which sweeps all around this world."

So said the captain, kneeling beside the little grave, and all that saw him echoed the feeling, and as they knelt beside him for an instant, more than one sob was heard, more than one tear flowed unchecked.

This sad duty performed, the terrible march was resumed, and day after day, week after week, our friends dragged themselves on, suffering cold, hunger, and thirst, enduring bodily and mental fatigue, hoping against hope, but still struggling on, that even if they died on the road they might be nearer that home for which they longed so earnestly.

What they suffered no one can realize who has not been through the same experience, but in the midst of all their trials they remained faithful to one another, cheering and assisting, guarding and comforting, each the other, and binding themselves closer together by ties that not even death could sever.

The sun appeared again, the snow began to melt, the ice showed signs of breaking up, and nearer was the end of their journey; but in spite of all that was encouraging there was still a terrible danger staring them in the face—death from starvation!

At last, when they had but enough fuel to build one wretched fire, but food enough to last one day, they came upon two men almost as badly off as themselves, and one of these the man to whom they owed the greater part of all their suffering.

CHAPTER XXV.

TYRRELL'S LAST ACT OF TREACHERY.

A foggy, misty, disagreeable morning in the month of May; the sun hidden from sight; nothing to break the monotony of the dreary scene; nothing but snow, ice, black waters and dull sky to be seen.

In the midst of all this desolation, a party of six men, making their way slowly over the soggy snow, now up to their waists in water, now walking dry-shod, but always uncomfortable.

Two men walk in advance of the others, one using a crutch and having to be frequently assisted by his companion.

These two men are Jack Clayton and Tyrrell; the others are Captain Chicks and his companions from the abandoned fort.

The march had been resumed after the meeting of the two parties, though Tyrrell never looked or spoke to the captain or his friends, seeming to have a dread of them, and always kept in advance.

The weather had changed suddenly within a day, and it was very evident that the breaking up was at hand.

If the boat left behind could have been brought along, it would now have been of use; but as Jack and Tyrrell had left the camp long before meeting Captain Chicks, that was out of the question.

They dared not remain longer, until the breaking up came, on account of the lack of food for that period, and hence their being now without it.

The supplies of the captain's party had given out, but Jack

divided what he had with them, though Tyrrell took him aside afterward and strongly protested against this, swearing that the men were spirits come to haunt them, and that it was throwing food away to give it to them.

The outlook was bad enough as it was, but there were worse things in store for them, though it was well they knew it not.

They were plodding on as described, when, upon traversing a bit of higher ground where the walking was hard and dry, Tyrrell pointed to something lying half buried in the snow ahead of them, and uttered a cry of terror.

"Don't go there!" he howled. "Don't do it! The place is cursed!"

Jack led him away, but Frank and the captain pushed on, and presently came upon the objects that had so alarmed the engineer.

They were merely two lifeless bodies clothed in fur, their sightless, staring eyes turned to the leaden skies, their faces distorted with agony, their limbs stiff and rigid, and twisted out of shape.

They were the bodies of Woods and the steward, who had been frozen to death from exposure.

That last terrible night had been too much for them, and there they lay, cold in death.

"Served 'em right," muttered Sam, who had no charity whatever for men of their class.

The bodies were searched, but not a single article of food was found upon them, not even a scrap.

They had devoured all they had, and had probably gone without any for some time, and had at last fallen down and been frozen to death.

Tyrrell knew what had befallen them, and he was savagely exultant over their fate, although not daring to look upon their dead bodies, evidently fearing that a like fate might be in store for him.

Frank and the captain, assisted by Ted and Sam, dug a grave in the snow, and placing the bodies therein, covered them over and left them to their eternal sleep.

That day Tyrrell seemed more anxious than ever to keep in advance, frequently glancing back over his shoulder to see whether the others were close at hand, and urging Jack on faster, so as to put a greater distance between them.

"We can't leave 'em behind, sir, altogether, if that's what you want," declared Jack, at length. "I won't have no more of that."

"But they are ghosts, spirits, phantoms, and not real men."

"We'll be the same, too, if we go to leaving them, and don't make a mistake. If you want to leave 'em behind, you'll have to go alone, and I won't let you do that, either."

"Maybe you can't help yourself!" thought Tyrrell, although he said nothing. "If he attempts to thwart me, he, too, shall die. I'll have no triumphing over me by anybody—see if I do!"

That night they encamped, if that term could be used for seeking refuge in a snow-bank, on the shore, in sight of the swollen waters, the mist settling thick around them, and the air being cold and clammy.

But for their sleeping-bags, fur-lined and impervious to wet, they could not have kept dry, for the warmth of their bodies was enough to melt the snow, and they all lay in puddles several inches deep.

It was past midnight, and all was still, when a figure suddenly arose and went limping about among the sleepers, picking up something here and something there, and making up a bundle, which he placed on the snow.

Grim awoke and snapped his fiery eyes at the midnight prowler, hissing and spitting at him as though he recognized a bitter enemy.

Ted had the cat in with him, and the latter bit his ear

slightly so as to arouse him, which he presently did most effectually.

The dark figure crouched down upon the ground, and in the thick mist was lost to sight.

"What's the matter, puss?" asked Ted, stroking his pet, the latter purring loudly. "What in thunder did you bite my ear for? Are you hungry?"

Grim cried, though rather as if in alarm than because he was hungry, and made an attempt to get out of the bag.

"What's the matter, Grim? You'll wet your black socks if you go out there. Why don't you keep quiet?"

The cat would not keep quiet, and at last Theodore, annoyed by his actions, let him go and turned over to take a fresh nap.

Grim approached the silent figure cautiously, when the latter shied something at him and frightened him away.

Then hastily gathering up the things he had collected, he limped off in the darkness, a bag over his shoulder, and a heavy stick in his hand.

Away into the mist and fog he went, and all in the little camp slept, unconscious of treachery or danger.

"Let them get on without me if they can," he hissed, as he limped off into the gathering gloom. "I am well rid of them. If I'd dared, I'd've put an end to their lives, but I might have missed my aim once and alarmed the rest."

The sleepers slumbered on, and Tyrrell stole away in the darkness, having done the last dastardly act that he would ever commit, and accomplished all the harm he could.

Grim came back and nestled by Ted's side after a little, but the young fellow was fast asleep, and did not wake up, and his pet did not seem to care to disturb him again, considering the reception his first effort had met with.

In the morning, when our friends aroused themselves, they noticed that Tyrrell was missing, and tracked him through the snow to some little distance, the point of his crutch being distinctly visible, so that there was no doubt that the tracks were his.

Something else was missing besides the treacherous scoundrel, and something of much more importance.

Every scrap of food and fuel, every ounce of lead, and every grain of gunpowder had been carried away by the black-hearted ingrate, leaving them exposed to the greatest danger they could fear—death by starvation, with no food, and no means of procuring it.

CHAPTER XXVI.

IN THE DEPTHS OF DESPAIR.

When the full consciousness of their terrible loss began to be felt, the members of the little party expressed themselves in various ways regarding the heinousness of the offense committed against them.

Sam declared that nothing was bad enough for the wretch who would do such a thing, and hoped that he would get no good from the things he had stolen, but that they would rather stick in his throat and choke him.

Jack, though as downcast as the rest, had no hard words for the villain, but said that he was sorry a man would so far forget himself, and hoped that there was pardon for such a wretch, though he was in doubt about it himself.

The captain said nothing, but as he looked out upon the water, and along the black and barren coast, heaved a sigh which spoke louder than words.

"He always was a villain!" declared Theodore, hotly, "and we need not have expected anything better from him. I might have known that something was up last night when Grim woke

me, but I wouldn't pay any attention to him, and this is the result."

"Well, there's no use crying over spilled milk," observed Frank, resignedly. "There is more chance of finding game now than there was a while ago, and if we do see anything we can knock it over the head."

"Blowed if I wouldn't give up the bulliest dinner I ever ate to do that for him," muttered Sam, who, now that there was nothing to eat, made no complaint of being hungry. "It would give me a satisfaction, it would, and it's a great pity somebody didn't do it for him long ago."

"I've got a cake of hard-tack in my pocket," said Frank, suddenly. "I'll divide it. We'd better not stay here, anyhow, and perhaps if we go on we'll find something."

The guns, being useless, were left behind, the pikes and axes being taken as weapons, and with heavy hearts the unfortunate fellows set out once more upon their tiresome way.

Theodore found a scrap of meat in one of his pockets which he had saved for Grim, and now offered him, but the latter refused it, and darted ahead, utterly regardless of wetting his velvet feet.

The meat was divided among them and, with the hard-tack which Frank had, made a sorry meal enough; but it was all they had.

Dragging themselves along wearily, nobody seeming to care to talk they journeyed on for several hours, until fatigue and the gnawings of hunger forced them to stop.

They cut strips from their seal boots and gnawed upon them, some little nutrition remaining, although it was little enough, and hard to get at.

The snow around them afforded them the means of quenching their thirst, so that agony was spared to them; but signs of scurvy had made their appearance, and all were more or less affected by the dread disease.

After a brief rest, they started off again, and kept on, with occasional halts, until dark, when they crouched down upon the snow together, lying as close to one another as possible, in order to keep warm.

"I wonder where Grim is?" mused Theodore. "I didn't think he would desert us. Poor fellow, I have nothing to give him now, and I should hate to see him starve."

An hour or so later he was awakened from a troubled sleep by hearing his pet mewling beside him, and feeling his whiskers brushing his face.

"What do you want, old fellow?" he asked, rising upon one elbow and stroking Grim's glossy fur. "I haven't anything for you to eat, my boy."

Grim went away a pace or so, and then returned, laying something in front of Ted, and purring loudly.

"What's this?" asked the young fellow, putting out his hand. "What!" he almost shrieked as he felt of it, "a bird! And you have brought it to me? Oh, Grim, Grim, you're a good friend after all, if you are only a poor black tomcat!"

Then catching the creature up in his arms, Ted hugged and kissed it, laughing and crying in one moment, in his hysterical joy.

The sound awoke the others, and they feared at first that the poor fellow had gone mad, but when he told them what had happened, they could not wonder at his conduct.

The bird which Grim had killed and brought to them was some kind of sea-fowl, very plump and fat, and, though having a decidedly fishy taste, not unpalatable.

Grim would not be induced to touch any of it until his master and his friends had eaten it, which they did raw and without seasoning of any kind, after which he made a meal of the scraps and the entrails, seeming to enjoy them immensely.

"Well, I won't say another word again' that cat," muttered Sam, when he had devoured his portion. "To think of his de-

nyin' hisself and bringin' that bird to us afore he touched a bit of it. If you don't stuff him and put him under a glass case when he dies, Ted, you'll be the ungratefulest creatur' I ever see, and 'll deserve to go hungry all yer life."

"You won't want to make a rabbit stew out of him any more, will you, Sam?" asked Frank, with a laugh.

"Bet you I won't. Grimalkin, you black rascal, you're a brick, and I shouldn't wonder at seeing you fetch in a Polar bear to-morrow."

He didn't do that, but on the morrow our friends came upon some sea-fowls similar to the one which he had brought to them, and got near enough to knock over half a dozen of them before the rest took to flight.

Better than that, they came upon several of their nests among the rocks, and found a great number of eggs, many of which were good, and made excellent eating.

They gathered as many as they could find and put them in one of the sleeping-bags, so that they might not be broken.

There was no means of making a fire, and nothing to make it of if there had been, so that they were obliged to eat all their food raw; but that was better than having none at all, and so nobody complained.

There were eggs enough to last them several days, and they hoped at the end of that time to find more, or come upon some other kind of food to take their place.

Next day the fog cleared up, and the sun came out bright and warm, melting the snow and making the walking most disagreeable.

They would often break through the crust and sink up to their necks in a mixture, half snow and half water, which was bitterly cold, and which would penetrate even their fur garments.

Sometimes, when wet to the skin, they would be obliged to run until they were dry, as they had no change of clothes, and did not dare to remove what they had.

Then, too, they would often have to make wide detours in order to get around the little creeks and bays with which the shore was indented, when, had these been frozen over, they might have crossed them without difficulty, thereby saving much time and labor.

They had not seen Tyrrell since they started, although he could not make as quick time as they, having to walk with a crutch, and they wondered greatly if they should ever see him again.

At last their supply of food gave out entirely, and they at a portion of the coast which appeared utterly barren and devoid of animal or vegetable life.

Grim suddenly left his friends for the second time, and they did not see him all that day, nor the next.

It was a cheerless enough night which they passed, without food or fire, and exposed to cold and damp, their hearts faint and sick, and hope banished perhaps forever.

The next day they tried to push on but their strength gave out at the first, and they sank down upon the black rocks overlooking the angry sea, and gave up the struggle.

"It's no use, boys," sighed the captain; "we can't go any further, and we may as well die here as to try and get away. Let us die together, and stand by each other until the last."

In fact, they were so worn out with hunger and fatigue, with exposure to the bitter cold, and with prolonged suffering, that it was marvelous that they should have gone on as far as they had.

Their clothes were ragged and worn, their feet were blistered and frost-bitten, the skin seemed to hang in loose folds upon their weary limbs, and sores and bruises were more numerous than the reverse.

They were hollow-eyed and wan, the scurvy had again attacked them, their voices were thin and cracked, their steps

tottering, and they presented, in all, a most wretched and pitiable sight, and one that no one could behold unmoved.

They sank down upon the bare rocks, unable to go another step, and as the wind howled among the ragged bowlders and monster bergs floating down the stream, it seemed as though it were singing their dirge.

So the day passed cheerlessly enough, and night was coming on with promise of worse sufferings, when, as the sun was sinking to rest, there suddenly dashed into their midst a black cat, famished and gaunt, and looking more like a shadow than anything else, while close behind followed half a dozen sturdy tars, who looked with awe upon their suffering brethren, caught them in their arms, and shed tears of joy.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE LAST OF AIL.

Yes, the castaways had been rescued, and rescued by black Grim—only a cat, to be sure, but as faithful a creature as ever walked on four feet, or two, either!

He had not found food, but he had found the crew of a whaler, whose captain had ventured into the north so early in order to be the first on the ground.

The presence of a cat was so surprising, that the captain knew at once it must mean something, and, therefore, when Grim started away, after having attracted attention, the skipper ordered his men to follow.

The faithful creature would not touch any food nor come near, but kept ahead of the men, as if to lead them on, never getting out of sight, but always maintaining a good lead.

While one party followed by land, the captain sent another in boats along the shore, feeling sure that there were men to be rescued, and that the strange black cat belonged to them.

The thoughtful skipper did not neglect to put plenty of fresh food and water in the boat, for it was likely enough that these would be needed.

The meeting between rescued and rescuers cannot be adequately described, for no pen could picture the deep emotion of the one, the heart-felt gratitude of the other.

Strong men wept like little children, grizzled old tars embraced one another and cried as though they had gone mad; the tenderness with which the castaways were lifted up and borne to the boats exceeded anything ever imagined.

Food and proper clothing, kindness and devotion, worked a wonderful change in our friends, and even when they had reached the whaler, before going aboard at all, they looked like new men.

Here they gradually recovered their health, strength and spirits, making a welcome addition to the crew, which was short, owing to three of the men having been lost overboard in a gale.

There never was a cat, not even the pampered Tabbies of Fifth avenue or Murray Hill, who had ever received such attention as Grim did after coming aboard the whaler.

He grew so sleek and so fat on the many good things given him, that if it had not been for the cold climate, he would certainly have died of apoplexy, and that would have been a misfortune indeed.

The whaler remained in the Arctic all summer, and then got away with a goodly supply of oil and bone on board, just in time to escape being nipped in the ice.

Our friends, having made a part of the crew, became entitled to their share of the profits of the trip, which were by no means small, the catch having been an unprecedentedly large one.

It was with light hearts, therefore, that Captain Chicks and his friends entered upon the last stage of their voyage home, for they now had health, wealth, and happiness, three things which really comprise everything we can look for in this world.

Tyrrell they never saw again alive, but one day a small iceberg drifted slowly by them, upon which lay something which resembled a human form.

They lowered a boat, and Chicks, Frank, Ted and Jack made a part of the crew which rowed alongside.

There, frozen stiff, his haggard face glaring at the leaden sky, his wasted limbs exposed to the pitiless wind, lay all that was mortal of Spencer Tyrrell, the misguided man who had been the cause of so much misery to them all.

He had died of starvation, as his sunken cheeks, hollow eyes and wasted form attested, and falling upon the ice, which had in time become detached and floated away, had at last come into the presence of those he had deserted.

His selfishness had proved his ruin; his crimes had reacted upon himself; his curses had come home to him; his life of sin and evil-doing had ended in a terrible death, and his name will be remembered but in mockery.

They wrapped the form in sail-cloth, tied a heavy weight to the feet, and let it down into the depths, to rest forever, no tears being shed, no expressions of condolence exchanged, no words of pity uttered; only Jack Clayton, standing near, with bowed head, murmuring softly to himself as he tightly clasped a little black book in his right hand:

"'Judge not, that ye be not judged.' I might have been in the same fix as they say he is, in the other world, if I hadn't took a round turn on my cable and fetched myself up standing. Maybe he didn't have the opportunities; maybe he didn't take 'em; it isn't for me to say. He's dead, and I hope he's happy, and so there's an end on't."

In due time the survivors of the *Atlas* reached home, and their strange story was made known, the infamy of Tyrrell and his mates in deserting the captain receiving that just condemnation which it deserved from all classes.

Frank told his father of his many adventures, and of the hatred which Tyrrell seemed to bear toward him, adding that he never discovered the motive which animated the evil-hearted fellow.

"Tyrrell?" repeated Mr. Anderson—"Spencer Tyrrell? I don't seem to recollect the name. What sort of fellow was he? Describe him to me."

Frank did so, and a sudden light seemed to break in upon the man's mind.

"Aye, aye—I know him now. His name was Spence, just common Bill Spence, and when young he was stable boy to a man named Tyrrell, who educated him, and whose kindness the rascal requited by robbing him of several thousand dollars."

"But did you ever see him?"

"I once knocked him down for his insolence to me, when I was running a steamer on the Mississippi. He was one of the engineers, and attempted to dictate to me, when, going beyond all reason in his abuse, I promptly floored him."

"Did he ever trouble you again?"

"He threatened to, and I knocked him down for that, and gave him his discharge at the first stopping-place. As he

stepped ashore, he shook his fist at me, twisted his yellow goat-beard, and hissed:

"As sure as my name's Bill Spence, I'll get even with you, Frank Anderson, for this—if not on your head, on that of him you love best."

"Then that explains his hatred of me."

"Yes; though you were but a baby when that took place. Your mother died soon afterward, and I had no more children, so that you were indeed the one I loved best. Well, the scoundrel is dead, it seems. Without meaning to be uncharitable, I must say that the world is better off without him, and that his departure from this life was a decided good riddance, for he never did a good deed in all his days, and he don't deserve the least pity."

Frank and Ted made many voyages after that, though they gave up the idea of trying to find the Pole, being quite satisfied to meet the dangers of the deep in other climes.

Sam Salt got to be head cook on one of the great ocean steamers, and if he did not feed well there he had no one to blame but himself; but we know he did, for we saw him the other day, and he was as fat as a friar, and as contented, so his hungry days must have passed away long ago.

Captain Chicks has retired; Jack Clayton is master of a vessel of his own, and a kinder-hearted, better-beloved captain than he is never trod a quarter-deck.

Last of all, where is Grim, that same old cat, that we have heard so much about?

Well at this particular moment, as I draw this veracious narrative to a close, he sits curled up on a velvet cushion over yonder by the fire, purring contentedly, as though he knew that I was writing about his former master, Ted Freeman, who presented him to me upon starting on his last voyage, and as if he also knew that I would not forget him.

Neither have I, Grim, old fellow—eh?

Purr-rr-rr!

THE END.

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